

ABDUL HAMID'S DAUGHTER

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THE TRAGEDY OF AN
OTTOMAN PRINCESS

BY

MELEK HANOUM

HEROINE OF PIERRE LOTI'S "DÉSENCHANTEES"

AND

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EDITRESS OF "A TURKISH WOMAN'S EUROPEAN IMPRESSIONS"

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PREFACE

I HAD no intention, when the MS. of the story of an Ottoman princess was given to me, of publishing an account of my own visit to the Imperial Ottoman Court. Since the publication of "A Turkish Woman's European Impressions" I see, however, that many of the critics have not understood that there is a difference, a very great difference, between life in an Imperial Harem and life in a harem of the town or country.

Zeyneb Hanoum and Melek Hanoum (the heroines of Pierre Loti's "Désenchantées") were never more than *guests* at the Imperial Court, for, being daughters of a late Minister of State, marriage with an Imperial prince would be quite im-

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possible. But these two Turkish women frequently visited the Sultan's daughter, to whom they played and sang and read, and one of them, Melek, has written the story—or rather the tragedy—of her Imperial hostess from notes given to her by the Princess's Hasnadar, or Treasurer of her household.

It has been suggested by friends who have read this MS. that a Western woman's impressions of the Imperial Harem might assist the reader in understanding life at the Ottoman Court, about which so little is known. That is my excuse for attaching to my friend's work my own impressions.

For obvious reasons, a veil of fiction has to be thrown over this story.

G. E.

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ABDUL HAMID'S DAUGHTER

THE SETTING OF THE STORY

IT is now over five years since I had the greater part of the story of an Ottoman princess in my possession. Only thirty-six pages were needed to complete a valuable chapter of contemporary Turkish history, and the work of a Turkish woman. But I could not get those concluding pages. Several times I threatened my friend Melek Hanoum that I would write them myself; yet, although I have lived the life of a Turkish woman, and can, therefore, claim to have knowledge on the subject, I found it quite impossible to give more

than technical assistance in translating and putting this MS. in order. For the story, apart from its historical interest, is an important human document, the pages of a Turkish woman's life, the revelation of her soul; it had to be written by a Turkish woman.

We did not intend to publish it till the death of the Sultan Abdul Hamid, and it seemed as if the forced prayer of the people, "Long live the Padischah!" had reached the throne of Allah and was being answered.

The ex-Sultan was a sickly looking man. His conscience gave him rest neither night nor day. Believing, as he knew his subjects did, in the duty of revenge, and as the Sultana Leyla does in this story, he feared that unless he took elaborate precautions to avoid it, some sympathizer of his dead brother, the Sultan Mourad, might come forward and mete out to the usurper and assassin the punishment he deserved. But the torment of an evil conscience did not

kill Abdul Hamid. More than once it was thought the time had come for him to face his Maker; but he triumphed over Death as over his enemies and friends. When Europe was busy preparing for his funeral, he was reading with intense enjoyment the accounts of what was to be when he was no more, and he thoroughly enjoyed them.

I well remember the day, about a year after the authoress of this book had escaped from Turkey with her sister at great peril to themselves, announcing to them the news that the "Red Sultan" was dying. A specialist had been summoned in great haste from Berlin; it was reported that at any moment the Sultan was expected to breathe his last. To Europe this news had some significance, but to the exiles, who were separated from home, family, fortune, and country—a loved but pitiful country—what did it not mean?

"The Sultan is dying," I said, but they did not take it in at once.

"The Sultan is dying," I repeated. Then, when the truth forced itself upon them, they burst into tears of joy, that at last this mighty tyrant was in the grip of death.

Only a Turk who has lived under that awful regime of terror could fully realize the meaning of those words. It meant the reunion of families of those who knew not whether their nearest and dearest were alive or dead and dared not inquire. It meant freedom from that army of spies, who dogged even the footsteps of Europeans and reported their every movement to the Sultan himself; it meant the permission to assemble in one's own house without being accused of plotting against the Imperial Majesty; it meant that books and newspapers could circulate without coming under the eye of the censor, who forbade the publication of anything uncomplimentary to the Turkish Government, and even deleted, for instance, such a word as "assassin," because it might suggest the assassina-

tion of the Sultan himself; it meant that any one could take up his pen and write without fear of banishment; it meant the right to think and act—in short, to enjoy a little of the freedom that makes life worth living.

Zeyneb Hanoum tells how one day she noticed her neighbour's house closed. On making judicious inquiries, she found that something had been suggested to the Sultan which made its tenants "suspect" at headquarters. The house was searched, and the worst that was found was some manuscript poetry; yet so great was the Sultan's desire to forbid writing amongst his subjects, that for this crime of modest authorship the neighbour and his family were banished, and none dared to ask of their whereabouts for fear of themselves being "suspect."

But the rejoicing began too soon. The Sultan did not die! The doctor who was summoned to attend him has long been sleeping his last sleep, but the dreaded Sultan lives on. Those iron nerves have

not yet worn themselves out, neither has that soul yet been called to answer for all the wickedness for which he is directly or indirectly responsible.

Then it was that Young Turkey lost patience and struck for freedom, and accomplished that wonderful revolution which amazed the civilized world.

Melek Hanoum, the gifted lady who, with her sister Zeyneb Hanoum, gave us those charming letters which are published in Pierre Loti's "*Désenchantées*," wrote the following story of an Ottoman princess during the regime of terror. She had left Turkey before Pierre Loti's novel appeared, but for years she had in her possession this other story, the finding of which by the Sultan's spies, would have cost her her life.

Ever since the world began, the "forbidden fruit" has had an irresistible fascination, and so seems to have been the case with the writer of this story. When it was dangerous to write—when,

I repeat, the finding of this MS. might have cost her her life—she worked at it with a zeal she has never since shown. In Western Europe, when she could have written without hindrance, it has taken me five years of continual coaxing to get those concluding thirty-six pages.

The writer of this story has confessed to me that one of the greatest disappointments she had in this country was to find how Turkish life was misunderstood in England. "How much better would those writers who have been dealing with the problems of Turkish affairs for a century back have understood them if they had tried to penetrate Turkish modes of thought and the Turkish soul and to feel as the Turks must feel! The West has lacked that broad sympathy in dealing with the East which can turn enemies into friends."

Melek Hanoum, herself so well versed, not only in the languages but the literature and history of the great European countries, with a wider knowledge of the

history and literature of England than the average student, was surprised and not a little hurt at the unjust and limited views of so many English people about Turkish harem life.

In Roget's "Thesaurus" "harem" stands as a synonym of a house of ill fame! When I came back from Turkey and announced the fact that I had been staying in a harem, I fear, now that I know what a harem is supposed to mean, that some people must have had a very curious idea of my morality. A short while ago, when I spoke on "Harem Life," the room was full of men, and not one woman had dared to come and hear what I might have to say.

For the sake of those who do not know, it will be necessary to again explain that the word "harem" comes from the Arabic "maharam," and means private or forbidden. It simply is the term used to describe those rooms in a Turkish house exclusively reserved for the use of women. It does not mean a collection of wives, as

so many people suppose. No man may cross the threshold of the harem unless he be a blood-relation of the lady of the house, and in many cases cousins even are excluded. As a matter of fact, it has exactly the same meaning as the Indian word "zenana," which stands for all that is most proper. There is just as much sense in saying that a Turkish man travels with his harem as in saying that an Englishman travels with his boudoir.

The only reason I can find that in any way justifies the popular idea of the impropriety of harem life is the fallacy that a Turk must necessarily have more than one wife. Yet how unjust is this supposition! The days of polygamy are past in Turkey, as almost everywhere else in the East. When the great Prophet of Islam limited the number of wives to four, he was legislating for a people amongst whom the practice of polygamy had been brought to its most awful aspects. The reforms instituted by him marked a very great improvement in

the position of women. Also polygamy was an economic necessity among communities, in which war was increasing the disproportion between the sexes. Mahomet, with his numerous wives, underwent self-sacrifice of no light character. I know, amongst my own Turkish friends, men equally meritorious, although it would be difficult to find a European who would deliberately sacrifice his own comfort and feelings simply to provide for a homeless woman, as a Turk will do. Therefore, how unjust it is that the followers of so great a reformer as Mahomet, co-citizens of ours in this Empire, should be judged solely by the circumstance that the law permits them to have more than one wife.

The great Prophet of Islam tried unceasingly to enforce "respect for women." His own daughter, "The Lady of Paradise," was an example of all that is pure, and true, and lovely in her sex. Speaking from personal experience, I found that Turkish men generally try to follow Mahomet's teaching with reference to

women, and keep them protected even from the indiscreet glances of the opposite sex. All the restrictions of their private life are intended to keep them from the ugly side of the world, and to preserve in them all that is divine in womanhood. In Turkey, the woman who, from one day to another, without a profession, without influence, without money, and without relations, has to turn round and do the best she can for herself, does not exist. There is always some one to provide for her.

Melek Hanoum, through the medium of the Hasnadar, shows us a little of her own soul. When she wrote this book, she had only come in contact with the bored and pampered women of the East; she has since seen the immorality and degradation which often accompany the destitution of the women of the West. She draws attention, also, to another feature of Turkish life which has been grossly misunderstood in Europe—"slavery." From questions which have

been asked me at lectures, I find that the word conjures up memories of those scenes which were brought to our knowledge by the authoress of "Uncle Tom's Cabin." But the Turkish slave system is very different; indeed, in most cases it should not be called slavery at all.

The Turkish slaves are generally Circassians, brought up by their parents with great care for manners and personal appearance, and often more money is spent on them than the parents can afford. They are an aristocratic race, as beautiful in form as in feature. Nothing hurts them more than to be mistaken for Turks, yet it is to the Turks they sell their daughters! Still, let us not misjudge the Circassian parents. It is often a terrible wrench to give up their daughters, but until it becomes the custom for their women to work for themselves, the parents have to choose for them between a coarse and abject poverty or handing them over for a sum (which repays the parents for the money

spent on their early up-bringing) to the Imperial family or a rich Turkish man's family, where they know they will be well treated. Melek Hanoum, in the story, gives us a picture of the life of these little slaves, who weep when they are not bought, refuse their freedom when it is offered to them; and tells how, when it is found they cannot endure a life of seclusion, they are married to some one who will take care of them, for they cannot be considered "free" unless some one is found to provide for them. Thus, for a Circassian mother to keep her daughters in poverty, however much she loves them, would be crippling their best interests. Perhaps, and it is not impossible, it may "be written" that one of her daughters is destined to become the mother of an emperor, the *Validé Sultana*, the highest lady in the land.

The Imperial Ottoman princes may only marry Circassian slaves. The reason for this is obvious. They cannot marry foreign princesses, as do the members of

the Royal families in Western Europe. To marry the daughter of a pasha, would give that pasha more power than is deemed advisable in democratic Turkey. So the Circassian slave, who, on being bought, becomes the exclusive property of her Imperial master, is chosen to be the mother of the future members of the House of Osman.

The position of *Damad*, Imperial son-in-law, is by no means an enviable one. Son-in-law of the Padischah! Who would dare refuse the honour? Yet unlucky indeed is he whom the master chooses as consort for his daughter! What a sacrifice of liberty it involves! *Étiquette, étiquette et toujours étiquette!* An escort every time he leaves the Palace! Always the haunting terror of incurring the wrath of the Imperial master! In many cases he is fettered for life to one with whom he has not one idea in common. And although the Moslem law allows the Faithful four wives, yet this privilege is not extended to the Imperial *Damad*. He is not with-

out temptations, as this story will show, but deviation from the path of virtue generally means disaster.

Edhem Pasha was the son of one of Turkey's greatest men, though in character scarcely worthy of the father who was such an honour to his country, and the Sultan Hamid chose him as consort for his beloved daughter because he was the son of a hero, who served his country well. Very often a Turk is married to an Imperial princess as a reward for distinguished services—Enver Bey, the hero of the Revolution, married the present Sultan's daughter—but in this case of Edhem Pasha he was rewarded for his father's distinguished services.

Princess Aïché is still the favourite Sultana of those ladies privileged to visit the Ottoman Court. Sorrow has sweetened her nature: she is kind, charitable, and exceedingly intelligent, but the names of "Edhem and Leyla" are never mentioned at the Court, and no one cares enough even to think about them.

Like a "wounded bird" the Sultana Aïché, Hamid's favourite daughter, came back to the father for whose crime she was punished, and not even his greatness could set up once more "the throne of happiness it was his ambition to build for her." But let it be said, in justice to the dethroned Sultan, that he did everything "to make her forget." Again, for Princess Aïché etiquette was set aside, and she found, in the musical afternoons that she was allowed to give, an interest to help run out the unhappy past. And not only did she invite all those ladies who could sing and play in Turkish society, but also professional musicians of both sexes travelling through Constantinople; the men, of course, singing and playing from behind a screen.

All this, however, must change. Already the "last of the Sultans" (in the old sense of the word) is drawing out his miserable existence in the Palace of *Beylerbei*. The time has not yet come to write the history of his reign, but, when it does come, what

a wealth of material for the writer's imagination to put into shape! For the historians his reign will be a sequence of vindictive massacres, and bloodshed, and crimes. *They* will tell us, no doubt, that it was under his regime that Egypt came under British rule, that Bosnia-Herzegovina was annexed by Austria, and Crete revolted. It is not the historians, however, who will be able to show us the real man. Just as the story of Adam cannot be told without the story of Eve, nor the story of Isaac without that of Rebecca, so no story of Hamid will be of value until the veil is lifted and we see him with the women of his harem.

And how strange and impossible it will all seem a hundred years hence! "Once upon a time," they will say, "there lived a great and wicked Sultan in a marvellous fairy palace on the shores of the Bosphorus, and he made himself so mighty that all the inhabitants of that enchanted land trembled before him. And he lived—that Sultan—at a time when women were not

free, and in his Palace alone there were five hundred—all of them beautiful—but they were only allowed to walk about in the gardens, where flowers withered unplucked, and ugly black men from Nubia alone were privileged to see those queens unveiled. Once a week the Sultan rode in a carriage drawn by four horses to a mosque situated quite near his Palace to worship Allah, and even to go this short distance armed men guarded him, so terrified was he of his people.

“And this Sultan was also frightened of his women. Sometimes he ordered the wicked black men to make them drink fatal draughts, and sometimes the Bosphorus was their last resting-place. And in the night, when fear drove sleep away from his eyes, this Sultan commanded his chief eunuch to collect the dancing girls of the Palace, and there before him for hours, with light feet and flowing veils, they tried to charm away the wild look from the master's eyes. This monarch, the poet will tell us, ‘the last of the

Sultans' (in the old sense of the word), had a heart of stone. Not one of those five hundred women—the most beautiful women that could be found throughout the length and breadth of the land—could make it throb."

Stay! reader; the poet has played you false. That heart of stone could throb at the very name of Aïché, his daughter.

Have patience, and you will hear her story.

PART I

PASSING THE SACRED
PORTALS

PRINCESS AND ENGLISHWOMAN

CHAPTER I

DIVERSIONS OF THE HAREM

“**B**EFORE the proclamation of the Constitution” Imperial Ottoman princesses were strictly forbidden to receive visits from European ladies. No exception, even, was made for the wives of the diplomatists accredited to the Porte.

In other European countries, the Court is the axis round which the society of the capital turns, but as in Turkey this is not possible, every ambassadress has to become a queen herself, and entertain like the sovereign in other countries.

Thus in Constantinople there are two distinct Courts: the *Corps Diplomatique*, and the households of Imperial Ottoman princesses, where on fête-days the wives

and daughters of *Ottoman* functionaries are entertained. Between the two Courts, however, is a gulf which before the Constitution could never be bridged, and Ottoman princesses passed into Eternity without the European Ambassadors knowing even that they had existed.

It seems at first sight strange that the Sultan's daughter should hold an important position in Turkish society, while a wife, even though she may have borne sons, does not count until she becomes mother of a Sultan. Then a Sultan's mother, the *Validé Sultana*, has the highest position in the land. She it is who is queen of the Ottoman Court, and all petitions from the Turkish women to the Sultan have first to pass through her hands.

During Hamid's reign the privileges accorded to Ottoman princesses were more and more curtailed. When the Empress Eugénie went to Constantinople during the closing years of the reign of Abdul Aziz, she visited an Ottoman

princess, but Hamid feared European contact for the Sultanas, and preferred to keep them in strict seclusion.

Until an Ottoman princess is married, she lives with her mother in the Imperial Harem, and no European woman has ever crossed the threshold of that *holy of holies*.

When the Kaiserin of Germany accompanied the Kaiser on his visit to Constantinople, Abdul Hamid, who was a past master in the art of hospitality, offered to grant the Kaiser's consort any favour she might deign to ask him. But he wriggled out of his promise with the ease and grace for which he was renowned when the Kaiserin expressed a desire to visit the Imperial Harem.

With an expression of intense sorrow, he blamed the conventions of Islam, which forbade women from enjoying a little of the freedom of the women of other countries. In order to show his feeling in a substantial manner, the Sultan offered his Imperial guest a bouquet of the most

exquisite roses that the Yildiz Park produced, and attached to the dainty petals of one of them, glistening like a dewdrop, lay an exquisite diamond of the purest water. But was the Kaiserin satisfied? She certainly accepted the Sultan's magnificent gift, and with much of the philosophy of the fox towards the sour grapes, she "supposed that after all a Sultan's Harem was scarcely a proper place for an Empress"!

.

When the difficulty of meeting members of the Imperial Ottoman family had been explained to me, I was still more desirous of making the acquaintance of the heroine of Melek Hanoum's story, the Princess whose sorrows I know by heart. Yet how was I to manage it?

I had almost decided to ask the then German Ambassador, Baron Marschall, for assistance—he would have found some way out of the difficulty; and no doubt I should have done so, had I not made

the acquaintance of Fathma, the Turkish friend to whom I owe so many happy and interesting hours.

For a long time, however, knowing how unhappy she would be, were her request refused, I hesitated to ask a favour of my new friend. Yet her father's position had to be taken into consideration so far as my ultimate object was concerned, and at last I asked her.

"Most certainly," she answered; "you shall see the Sultana."

.

Every day for a fortnight I reminded Fathma of her promise.

"I have not had a moment," she said: "I have been working hard." What she called "working hard," however, I, a woman of the West, called "gazing into space"; and what she called "deep thinking" I classed as "dreaming"—our different points of view.

I began to lose patience. "Little Fathma, houri of my heart, my soul, my

life, my carnation, and my rose," I began, using the picturesque Eastern terms of endearment, "do you really wish to give me the pleasure of seeing this Ottoman princess?"

"Why, of course, 'my heart's heart,'" she replied.

"Then attend to it this very moment, little mouse, before you curl yourself up on that comfortable divan"—a Turkish woman can rarely resist a divan.

"There is plenty of time."

"Not for my impatience. You are as dear to me as my eyes! Won't you do this for me now—this very minute?"

And Fathma did as I asked her.

.

The Princess sent word that she would receive us the following Sunday afternoon. It was only Thursday! What an eternity to wait!

In the meantime she might change her mind, or the Protocol might change it for her, for the Protocol can play scurvy tricks.

Possibly, also, she or Fathma might be ill, illness being a favourite occupation in the harems after buying, visiting, and reading are exhausted.

. . .

The morning at last arrived. The Princess had not changed her mind, neither was she ill, but, alas! Fathma was.

Would the Princess receive us another day? Fathma was too ill to rise.

"Do come just this once, little almond blossom," I said.

"Such imprudence might cost me my life," she answered.

"You said you would die for me; now is your chance," I began. "Up you get! Up you get!"

"I am too ill."

"Nonsense; if you have faith, I have something to cure you."

Together we swallowed adult doses of ammoniated quinine.

"Now you will be cured in half an

hour," I said, and in half an hour she was cured.

.

The hours it takes a Turkish woman to dress! In this manner a large portion of the day is used up. How they enjoy donning the costumes of different countries and centuries—costumes which in many cases they make themselves from those irresistible stuffs which are brought to the harems for sale by Greek women. Many an hour, too, my little friends used to spend doing each other's hair, and some one always attended to mine, much to the annoyance of Saadet, who was my particular slave during my visit to the Harem.

Saadet spoke French remarkably well. She had had lessons with her mistress from the French governess, but this knowledge in no way turned her head, as might have happened with a person of her class in Western Europe. Her dress was picturesque—a bright blue Oriental stuff

edged with a silver border. Her masses of ebony hair she wore in two plaits, and a picturesque Eastern turban completed her costume. But what eyes! And how pathetic she could look! Hours she would spend telling me Arabian Nights stories, and never did she seem too tired to render any service.

"I would follow you to the ends of the earth, most virtuous Hanoum," she said to me one day. "Will you take me?"

"When you have given away your beautiful eyes, Saadet," I answered. But she did not in the least understand what I meant.

.

Turkish women have not the false modesty of the Western woman. If a Turkish woman thinks herself handsome, in all sincerity she admits it. No one would think more highly of the Turkish woman who, knowing herself to be beautiful, undervalued her charms. Beauty is her dowry.

What is the first question that is asked about her? "Guzelmé?" (Is she pretty?) Not "Is she rich? is she nice? Has she good qualities?" Therefore why should not a Turkish woman speak openly about her fortune?

The Turkish woman pays particular attention to her hair, and she is repaid by being the possessor of long, thick, glossy locks. True, no badly ventilated hats prevent its growth or necessitate combing it back the wrong way, and she can dress it in any style she pleases without having to apply to her Far Eastern sisters for "supplementary locks."

When I first saw what beautiful hair most Turkish women have, and heard how often it is washed, I rejected for ever the popular fallacy that soap and water are bad for the hair. Hair has to be included in those baths of purification ordained by the Prophet for members of both sexes, when there is a possibility of their becoming parents.

The wise and wonderful law-giver of

Islam! How little in the West have we understood this great Reformer! And yet, I say again, our British Sovereign has more Mohametans in his Empire than any other ruler. How is it possible not to speak with admiration of this far-seeing Prophet, who has forbidden for his followers as a matter of religion all that was bad for them in the way of hygiene?

See on how high a level he has placed motherhood! If only we in the West could teach fathers and mothers their grave responsibilities, and, curious though it may sound to Western ears, Eastern ideals and practice with regard to purification in married life, we might not have so many degenerate specimens loafing about our streets and filling our work-houses and prisons.

.

“Mihrinour” was the name my Turkish friends gave me. It made me a sister at once; a veiled mystery, like themselves. I was pleased and amused with my sweet-

sounding Turkish name, which, being interpreted, means "the light of the moon."

.

"Mihrinour," Fathma used to say to me when she was more than usually weary of doing nothing, "I have a *nostalgie* for your hair; may I dress it just once more?"

Then away we would go to the big bedroom; down would come my hair, all the slaves following us as ardent spectators, and the performance began.

First of all, I would be transformed into the *Vierge des Douleurs*, though my face is too round and my eyes too British for that picture. I was more of a success as Marie Antoinette and Madame de Pompadour; the Madame Récamier style was not becoming to me, and one must be born a Cléo de Mérode.

When all the models in the *Livre de Coiffure* had been exhausted, Fathma went to the East for inspiration. I was first

Roxelane, then Mihri, the favourite wife of Abdul Aziz, and even the beautiful Princess Aïché, none of these styles, however, suiting me in the very least.

What did it matter? I was giving all these bored women around me pleasure, and the slaves clapped their hands with delight when each new figure appeared; besides, being transformed into a whole constellation of feminine celebrities in one sitting is not a disagreeable nor altogether unintellectual way of spending the afternoon.

“Now make me myself, to wind up the *séance*,” I said to Fathma.

“Let me see, what is your particular style?” asked Fathma.

“As few hairpins as possible, the *tout ensemble* to be thrust on to that part of my head where it is most likely to remain—the whole operation not to last longer than three minutes.”

“*Quel sacrilège!*” they cried together.

CHAPTER II

THEIR LITTLE LEISURED VANITIES

ON the morning that we were preparing to visit the Princess, Fathma dressed her own hair. But she, whose skilful little fingers had turned and twisted my locks into any style she liked, could not manage her own. At last, however, when she had to be satisfied with one of her efforts, my little Saadet came and showered upon her hair a dust which gave it a golden lustre in certain lights.

“What a pity to spoil blue-black hair with golden dust!” I said.

“It is to rival your helmet of molten gold,” answered Fathma, smiling.

But the hairdressing was not finished; there was a *mousseline-de-soie* and flower

decoration to come; blue and silver to match the Paquin gown which took all the colour out of mine.

"Don't put anything in your hair, little mouse," I said; "the Princess should see you as you are now."

"That is impossible, Mihri," she answered: "only Princesses may appear bareheaded at Court."

It was so interesting to watch Fathma dress that I almost forgot the prospect of seeing the Princess myself.

"Aren't you going to wear your jewels?" I asked, running to where I had seen them a few days before—pearls, diamonds, emeralds, rubies, and other precious stones, rings, brooches, bracelets, and a magnificent tiara, all flung together in a cardboard box, as if they were merely paste.

It surprised me to see how few jewels the women wore. Their grandmothers had given them a "jewel indigestion," they told me; yet each woman has her jewels, as she has her

trousseau, although they are more often used to raise money in a hurry than as objects of adornment. Fathma was particularly fond of a string of French beads (value half-a-crown), and on most important occasions, except the visit to Court, she wore these beads.

"It is not etiquette to wear jewels at Court," said Fathma.

"Why?"

She shrugged her shoulders, and we both laughed.

The train of Fathma's dress, cut in an unusual manner, was caught off the ground with little silver buttons. This certainly improved the appearance of her dress, which looked incomplete without it. But why had Fathma suddenly become so practical?

It could not be that she was trying to save her dress, she who leaves her clothing on the floor till the *Dadi* (old family nurse) picks it up. There must be some other reason. So, knowing how much a Turkish woman dislikes questions,

I began to ask them in the most discreet manner possible.

"I can't take my eyes off that train, it looks so practical," I began discreetly. There was no need for her to reply unless she wished.

"It is not a question of being practical," she answered, "it is etiquette again. Only a princess may sweep the Palace carpets with her train."

I started. "Fathma, I am not a princess, but I have a train, and I can't button it to my waist like you; all my underneath garments would have to be readjusted."

"Don't be so silly!" she laughed. "You are not really a Turk, though you are our sister. The Princess will enjoy seeing your English clothes."

"My Paris clothes!" I corrected with dignity.

.

There were four daughters and sixteen sons all staying in our harem,

the children of four successive, not concurrent, mothers; and the dear old Pasha looked as if he would like to pat himself on the back every time he eyed the little world of which he was king.

The relationship between a Turkish father and his children is less intimate than with us. He is the patriarch rather than the father—the patriarch before whom all the sons respectfully put on their fezzes; the patriarch on whose entrance into the room the daughters stand.

One day the Pasha, engaged in important business, forgot to request his sons to be seated. They might have stood for one, two, or three hours, but seat themselves they would not without his permission.

It was delightful to see the homage paid by the whole household to the Pasha, and I enjoyed seeing the slave devotedly kissing the hem of the master's coat as a sign of respect.

In no country in the world is there so perfect a social democracy as in Turkey. Each man stands on his merits, wins his own spurs without the protection, or in spite, of his father's name. From a coalheaver he may become a Sultan's Minister, his Grand Vizier, the highest officer in the State, the only man who, except the Cheik ul-Islam and the Imperial eunuch, has the title of "Highness."

A Turkish woman gives her slaves the benefit of the culture her children enjoy, so that to meet a slave who can speak French is an everyday occurrence. A Turkish mistress knows that her slave may one day have a more exalted position than she, but she feels no jealousy on this account, and from the slave is withheld nothing which can develop her mind. When the slave has a chance of repaying her mistress's kindness, she never hesitates to do so. One of the ex-slaves of Fathma's aunt came to lunch with us one day. This

aunt had had her married to a wealthy merchant in Smyrna ; when she returned to the scenes of her servitude she was treated as an honoured guest. On her side, she brought many presents, and did all in her power to show her gratitude to the family under whose hospitable roof she spent happy years of her life.

It was she who volunteered the information that she had been a slave in the house where she was now a guest. Before she was purchased by Fathma's aunt, this same slave had been in Egypt ; the master had fallen in love with her, and her mistress had had her thrashed so violently that even to-day her body is disfigured with the marks. The status of a slave is not so high in Egypt as in Turkey, in spite of the fact that Egypt is under British rule, for in Turkey the slaves have a right to lodge complaints about the treatment they receive at the hands of their masters and mistresses

This wealthy merchant's wife told me all this in perfect French, and without the slightest suspicion of humiliation.

How different is the West! How do we treat our "inferiors"? Why should they respect work which we speak of as "menial"? Why should the woman who cooks the meat be less respected than the woman who eats it; and if culture is proper for the drawing-room, why should it be denied the woman in the kitchen?

To a person who seriously considers the manner in which not only servants but even governesses, who are so often our superiors, are treated in the West, this spirit of Turkish democracy appears very beautiful. We ought to have more brains in the kitchen and more heart in the drawing-room.

.

"Whatever has become of my hat?" I asked, for in my trunk not one hat was to be found. At home I should

have been indignant at having my things strewn here, there, and everywhere, but here, in Turkey, I wanted to be a Turkish woman—so why should I complain? My hat and furs, however, were found without too much delay; every woman in the harem had tried them on and admired themselves in these curious trappings of the West. As might be expected, they put them all on the wrong way. They looked very funny with their little heads in the muffs, and, indeed, the muffs were just as suited to be worn on their heads as some of the curious present-day fashions in hats.

An old lady in the harem, so old-fashioned that she refuses to recognize the Christian calendar, suddenly decided to have corsets bought for her. When she came down to luncheon we saw no difference in her figure. All at once, however, she cried out in agony, "I can bear it no longer," and when she retired to take off the "instrument of torture"

it was found she was wearing it upside down!

.

I did not know exactly what costume to wear to visit the Princess, so I chose the prettiest garments I possessed—a mixture of summer and winter. My dress was a thin mauve *crêpe de Chine*, my hat was a mauve silk with a crown of violets and leaves; an ermine scarf and muff completed my costume.

“Are you not going to wear a coat?” asked Fathma; “it is bitterly cold.”

I only possessed a travelling coat and an opera cloak, and neither of them looked well with my gown, so I made up my mind not to feel chilly, though my teeth were chattering.

Never shall I forget that cold! It was blowing what we at home call an east wind; in the East perhaps they call it a west wind, but it seemed to freeze me to the bone. Even “Chocolate” was surprised to see me without a coat.

"You will die," he said, grinning from ear to ear.

"Don't you worry," I said: "you won't be rid of me so easily."

Chocolate's real name was Moukbil Agha, "Agha" being the humblest Turkish manner of saying "Mr." His office was chief eunuch to the family with whom I was staying. I called him Chocolate Agha, a name to which he at first objected, but, as I continued to use it, he just had to grin and bear it, grinning being one of his principal occupations. Chocolate's fingers reminded me of those chocolate fingers that, warped by the sun and notched by handling, I used to admire as a child in the confectioner's window. When he went out, new mustard-coloured gloves, the necessary "conclusion" to his Western frock-coat, hid for the time his unsightly fingers.

And how he fancied himself in this frock-coat! Yet what a perfect guy it made of him! In the roomy nether garments and gold-embroidered bolero

of Egypt he would have been the finishing touch to a harem scene—almost picturesque; but, alas! Providence had given him legs to match his hands, and notches in places bulged through the stuff, while in other parts there was enough and to spare of material to accommodate legs four times his size.

When first I saw Chocolate I said to Fathma, "I can't bear the horrid old black man to come near me."

"Poor fellow!" she said; "he is indeed to be pitied."

"He looks so awful."

"Don't tell him that: he is very proud of his appearance."

"What a blessing!" I answered; "but I wish he would let me buy him some brilliantine. I don't like his taste in perfumery any more than his gloves."

"I am sure he would be very glad; perhaps he would let us out a little more often," said Fathma.

Chocolate saw us looking at him and grew suspicious. It was part of his duty to be suspicious.

"Tell him I intend to buy him a present." He grinned.

"But we must go out to-day to buy it," I added.

He had intended to keep us in that afternoon, but at the thought of a present he changed his mind, and ordered the horses to be harnessed and the carriage prepared.

We were now friends, and he became confidential.

"Ask the virtuous Hanoum," he said to Fathma, "if there are men like me in her country."

"I only prescribe for women," I answered, avoiding the question.

"He'll send his wife to be cured," said Fathma.

"His wife?" I queried.

"He has a wife, who has slaves to wait upon her, and a family of fine children."

“But, little Fathma, do please explain.”

“My poor Mihri,” she answered, “can’t you understand? *C’est pour sauver les apparences.*”

CHAPTER III

FROM HAREM TO PALACE

I WAS determined to buy a peace-offering for Chocolate that very afternoon.

“Will you help me put on my veil?” I asked by way of compliment.

We started off to the town, as we always did, with much pomp and ceremony, Chocolate’s assistant helping us down the steps into the carriage.

To an elegant *coupé* lined with dark red satin, two white horses were harnessed, the trappings and the coachman’s uniform being dark red to match the lining of the carriage.

The horses occasionally stamp with impatience, but no one else in Turkey

notices the flight of time. To break the monotony of their existence now and again they plunge. One day they grew so restive that a crowd collected. Fathma pulled down my veil. The cause of our horses plunging was a steam-roller, one of the first symptoms of the reforming fever which had found its way to Constantinople with the Constitution.

"Where shall we stop?" asked Chocolate, with a child's curiosity to know what was coming.

"The chemist's," I said.

"The chemist's?" he repeated, blinking his little beady eyes.

Then we wrote down the order to be given to the chemist—a toothbrush and a bottle of the best quality brilliantine, violet scented.

As Chocolate had no idea what I wanted, the chemist brought a collection of toothbrushes almost to the carriage door, where Chocolate took them and offered them for our inspection.

"They are too soft," I said. "Tell him Englishwomen have hard gums."

Chocolate gave the tray back to the man, who carried it to the shop, this work being too menial for so mighty a personage as a chief eunuch. Our carriage was drawn up in a side street about a hundred yards from the shop.

Next came the chemist with a tray of brushes which would have made horses' gums bleed.

"Tell him it is for a lady, not a horse," we said, and, being devoid of humour, he did as he was bid without a smile.

"I'll jump out and get it for myself," I said, but Chocolate put his foot down.

"Every one knows me," he said, "and you would be seen stepping out of this carriage."

"And, Mihri," added Fathma, "you are supposed to be deaf and dumb."

"Of course," I answered; "I had forgotten." The truth was that my attempts at Turkish were so feeble that

it was considered wiser for me to be deaf and dumb. I had one verb to signify most actions—to run, to walk, to fetch, and to carry—and with an effort of imagination, I was understood.

At length Chocolate brought the toothbrush I wanted. The man carried the “heavy parcel” to the carriage, and we drove on.

“How much is it, Fathma?” I asked.

“Mihri!” exclaimed Fathma, indignantly; “how can you be so rude?”

“But in my country——” I began.

“You are in my country now,” she interrupted.

Yet all the same I felt just a little annoyed at having bought presents at the Pasha’s expense.

.

By the morning that we were going to visit the Princess, Chocolate and I were great friends; he was even familiar and funny. Several times he walked

round the table whilst we had lunch and took a peep at my hat.

"If you imagine you will ever see England again you are much mistaken; they will never let you leave the Konak. I know Dilaver Agha."

"So shall I shortly," I answered.

"You will never see your country again," he repeated, grinning.

"Oh! I am terrified," I answered.

Then his face changed; he grew anxious.

"Tell the Hanoum there is no cause for fear; I was only joking; she can trust me."

"I know I can, Chocolate," I answered.

.

To visit the Princess, Chocolate had ordered an extremely elegant *coupé* which I had never seen before.

It was lined with white satin, but in the place of the buttons of our Western carriage seats were little pearls,

the seat itself being edged with gold braid and the back against which we leaned handsomely embroidered.

We had a fine pair of white horses with scarlet trappings ornamented with a green and white enamel design, the lamps being made to match, whilst the coachman's red coat and fez lent a warmth to the atmosphere it did not possess.

Chocolate put up the latticed windows ; we could see all the same the little there was to see—the Bosphorus, the summer palaces, and a few barren trees stretching up their leprous branches to heaven. We knew the landscape by heart.

Three other negroes had gone to await our arrival at the Princess's Konak. Chocolate scrambled up beside Rechad, the coachman, curled his body into a pot-hook to keep out the cold, and we started.

“Dear Fathma,” I exclaimed, “what is the matter with the horses?”

"We have to go slowly," she answered.

"It is etiquette!" We finished the sentence together.

.

On our way we passed a few carriages—"Cook's tourist parties" most of them looked, but my attention was particularly drawn to one of them. It was a pair of chestnut horses that first attracted me: they had such well-formed bodies, and stepped along with the air of horses who knew they were "thoroughbreds."

But from the horses my eyes wandered to the occupants of the open landau, then I looked again and the carriage passed.

"Mihri," exclaimed Fathma, for every drop of blood had left my cheeks, "what is the matter?"

"A man of no consequence," I answered; and I spoke the truth.

Five minutes before I should have considered him a man of some importance—now, he was as dead as the little

bodies whose souls had abandoned them to the wind and the rain and the snow which began to cover the little cemetery as we passed.

Fathma asked no questions, so I told her all about him.

"That man might have been a great deal in my life, but I preferred to present him to a friend. See what a magnificent gift I have made her! She imagines him hard at work in another part of the globe!"

"But he has not married this woman with whom he is travelling?"

"What he is doing is worse!"

"Mihri!" exclaimed Fathma. "It is easy to see you have never lived in a polygamous country. Although polygamy is *très mal vu* in Turkey nowadays, there are still women living who could give you their personal experiences of polygamy. Ask my grandmother to tell you how she suffered!"

For a while we sat in silence. Then Fathma continued: "Imagine what it

means when another woman has the right to half your existence and that the children of the rival have the same rights as your own. Our grandmothers as the lesser of two evils chose as their rivals young, obedient, unintelligent women, so that they should still remain supreme in the master's life."

Again we were silent.

"Mihri," Fathma began again, "you ask too much of men. Do you know that we consider these foreign women safety-valves for our men? A wife is a wife. What are they? Sometimes our husbands tell us of certain ladies who are installed at their expense a few doors off. It hurts, but we pity the women and are thankful for ourselves. Turkish women have had to put up with rivals for the sake of their children. Never speak of polygamy to me again!"

Then without reason we both laughed heartily. There were tears in our eyes a minute ago, but now we were laughing—laughing as only Turkish women can laugh;

and we were indeed real Turks—our characters were in harmony with the dear Bosphorus. On one side are the cypress-trees, on the other is the blue Eastern sky. One moment it is death, then life; now it is despair, then laughter. Life in Turkey may be monotonous for a woman, but, thank Heaven! she at least has many moods.

“I wonder if it is an advantage to see without being seen, Fathma?” I asked. “At some future date I shall hear the man who has passed relating how he spent this very afternoon—how hard he was working—how he had wished all the while he had been at home.”

“And the Koran says,” went on Fathma, laughing, “Allah created man with only one heart.”

“But,” I added, “the devil slit his tongue in two.”

.

Along the road as we crawled to our

destination groups of beggars appeared. Whence they came, I know not; they are like the urchins in my country, whom instinct seems to guide straight into a good street row.

"Help us, Divine Highnesses! Charity! Charity!" they cried, never ceasing their *temenahs* (Turkish salutes—the Turk greets you from the soles of his feet, his heart, and his head) except to pick up the coins which Chocolate threw to them. They were shoeless, and their poor little bodies were hardly clothed, yet they were picturesque—a ragged pink dress, a ragged pink shawl, masses of hair and lovely eyes—and their quivering voices of supplication made us sad. "If I were an artist," I said to Fathma, "I would jump out and sketch this scene." A fortnight later Fathma had the scene painted and presented to me.

"Some day, dear Fathma," I said, "let us spend the whole afternoon throwing coins to the beggars. I love

to see them rolling over one another in their desperate efforts to get the money, stuffing it into their mouths as the only safe place."

"Did you hear what he said?" said Fathma, laughing.

"No."

"Chocolate told the beggars he had no more change, and one of them says that he can give it to him."

Then followed a curious little scene. One urchin had the imprudence to open his "purse," empty its contents into his fist, and was picking out the necessary change to give to Chocolate, when a big bully came down with a heavy fist and took the lot.

I wished we could have stopped the carriage and made him return the money, and that I had had a substantial coin to pop into the little boy's mouth. A pitiful specimen he looked, howling and screwing his grubby little knuckles into his big beautiful eyes.

I had no money, and in that respect

I was truly Turkish. Money is not considered necessary for any Turkish woman. Everything is paid by the chief eunuch or put to the Pasha's account. Yet some women, I know, have felt so much this want of ready money that they have disposed of their jewels for a mere song, and when they have the coveted coin it melts like snow in the ocean.

.

But here we are before the Princess's Konak, and again etiquette is carefully followed. The eunuchs who preceded us have given the signal of our arrival, and the park gates have been thrown open in readiness. The coachman draws up to let Chocolate down from the box, and another eunuch takes his place, whilst the remaining two hold the horses' heads.

Then Chocolate, having shaken out his stiff limbs, takes his place at the head of the procession, marches with solemn dignity to the marble staircase

where the carriage stops, and Dilaver Agha helps us out and leads us up the Palace steps. At last I am there, the first Englishwoman the Princess has ever admitted to her home.

Dilaver made a speech of welcome to us in the name of the Princess, to which Fathma replied, and I added a few words in English, which amused him immensely.

When we arrived at the big front door we were greeted by five more eunuchs, who executed the orders they had received from their chief. Fathma pointed out that the slaves were also arranged in groups of six, those who served the coffee, those who unveiled the guests, etc., but always there was one to give the order with five to execute it.

.

The slaves began their *temenahs* as soon as we were in sight. A strange company they looked from afar! Some of them had their hair up, some wore

it in plaits, but all had *red hair*. On one side of their little caps of costly lace were artificial flowers with an "end of the season" appearance, and on the other big diamond brooches. In honour of the English Hanoum they wore many jewels. From a distance their gowns appeared like dressing-gowns. They reminded me not a little in other respects of those harpies still to be seen in some French theatres, who are no ornament and of little use, and who, when you have taken your place, come to remind you of "*Mon petit service, madame.*"

As we came nearer, however, I found these gowns were made of hand-woven tissue and embroidered with a design so fine that it might have been printed. Amongst the gowns of the twenty-four slaves I recognized an old friend. I have a small square of Persian embroidery which hangs in my little drawing-room in London, which was the same as the dress of one of the slaves—a design of roses and gold leaves—and it was de-

lightful to find this little bit of my own home in the Princess's Palace! I wanted to shake hands with the slave, but that being impossible, I sent her instead three kisses, and the little slave, wondering no doubt why she had been singled out for such an honour, smiled happily in the midst of her *temenahs*.

"May Allah protect you, virtuous Hanoum!" she murmured as I passed.

In a few minutes we were in the yashmak-room.

CHAPTER IV

IN THE ANTE-CHAMBER

FATHMA wore a handsome blue satin feridgi embroidered in shaded blues and tarnished silver; this and her yashmak had to be removed before seeing the Princess. A group of six slaves entered; the head gave the order, and soon ten skilful fingers were undoing the two triangles of muslin which together compose this headdress.

But hardly was Fathma's yashmak removed, when the famous Hasnadar appeared, the Controller of the establishment, the Treasurer, the Head Everything. The position she occupies has no exact equivalent in our Western Courts, and it is usually given to an unmarried

woman as a reward for long and faithful service to the Imperial family.

The Hasnadar was astonished to see me so thinly clad, and said so to Fathma, who explained that Englishwomen, brought up on sport, felt neither cold nor heat. "These Englishwomen are marvellous," she said; "they can climb mountains all day, sleep in the open air at night, swim like fishes, jump their horses over fences like men, shoot wild beasts, and yet look as feminine as this Hanoum does."

The big-game hunting interested the Hasnadar. "Wild beasts, Fathma Hanoum Effendi!" she exclaimed, although too polite to doubt her word.

I had told Fathma of an English lady who accompanied her husband on a big-game shooting expedition to Central Africa. She brought back many fine specimens with her, and her father, proud of his daughter's skill, has placed them in the entrance-hall of his country house.

It was unfortunate that Fathma had

repeated that story to the Hasnadar, for she concluded I was the sportswoman, and no woman could be less fit to shoot wild game than I.

"How many wild animals has this Hanoum killed?" asked the Hasnadar.

"In the entrance-hall of my flat is a fox's head," I answered, as we went to get some refreshment.

.

Again came the slaves in groups of sixes to serve us, five of them carrying a golden tray, with a big golden bowl of violet jam. For each person a separate golden spoon was provided, and water served in glasses of the purest crystal and standing in holders of gold, studded with diamonds, rubies, and emeralds.

The etiquette was the same for the coffee slaves. One carried a golden coffee-pot, the others a tray on which were Turkish coffee-cups studded with diamonds, rubies, and emeralds.

During the early part of the reign of Abdul Hamid, similar cups were used by the Sultan's guests at the Selamlık, but the practice was discontinued after a certain Western lady, having finished her coffee, mistook her pocket for the tray.

I sipped my coffee very slowly, as a compliment to the Hasnadar, glad of the opportunity of studying the woman of whom I had known and heard so much about for over five years. The Hasnadar, too, studied me, and asked questions about my country.

"The virtuous Hanoum is like a sunbeam," she said.

I returned the compliment by calling her "a lovely spring morning," although it is a dangerous experiment to use imaginative expressions in a foreign tongue, as all who know French must have discovered.

These picturesque Eastern terms of flattery have little more meaning than "good morning," but they fascinated me,

and I asked Fathma to make me a list of them.

She said she would ;—perhaps she will, some day !

.

“Where is the Hanoum’s husband?” the Hasnadar asked Fathma. Fathma hesitated to reply.

“Tell her, little Fathma,” I said, “spinsterhood in my country is nothing of which to be ashamed.”

The Hasnadar looked surprised, and wanted to know the reason of my celibacy.

“Tell her I prefer to be single.”

“Surely this Hanoum is joking!” she answered.

.

The Princess’s Konak was large and so white that it was dazzling in the sunshine. The architecture was of the Moorish style, so often seen in Turkey, with its protruding upper stories sup-

ported by colonnades, its curious little cupolas painted in brilliant colours, and its big porticoes; but, as in the houses the embroideries were eclipsed by the gaudy-coloured curtains and carpets, so the delicate tracery of the houses was hidden by a wealth of climbing flowers.

Inside, the Palace was more Eastern than any interior I had yet seen in Turkey. The entrance was a semicircle of mosaic work, hidden partly by Oriental rugs. There were also, in spite of the season, many flowers, and in one corner an immense bright *mangol*, or brazier, which gave out a welcome heat. Many interesting things there were to be seen, and I have since thought, remembering its priceless treasures, that everything worth seeing in Turkey seemed to belong to Allah, to the Imperial family, or to the Ministers.

The walls were white and gold, with panels of hand-embroidered satin. The half-dome of the entrance-hall, which reached the top of the Palace, was

painted pale blue, with stars and crescents liberally dotted about the firmament, red and gold bars dividing the dome into half-quarters. This was the real thing which Westerners imitate in stucco and paint.

At the end of the entrance-hall were five large doors of gold and enamel, and before each door stood a eunuch.

I asked Fathma whether the hinges and locks were all of real gold.

"Why, of course!" she answered in surprise.

At a word of command from their chief the five eunuchs threw back the door, and, taking the Hasnadar's hand, we went up the central staircase, whose carpets had been swept by the trains of princesses of the Court of Abdul Medjid.

The slaves had now taken their positions on either side of the staircase, Fathma acknowledging their *temenaks* from time to time, and I trying to do the same. The slaves interested me.

At first their peculiar appearance, the fine workmanship of their dresses, and their red hair had so absorbed my attention that I almost forgot the part they can play in a Turkish household. They followed us afterwards into the *salon* where the Princess received us—to form the Court. She was waiting at the door to meet us, an honour usually only extended to Imperial Princesses.

I had intended to follow the Court etiquette and touch the hem of her dress, but she came forward and, kissing me on both cheeks, led me to the foot of her bridal throne. -

In every Turkish household there is a bridal throne. In poorer families, though called a bridal throne, it is little more than a glorified chair, but, since the bride sits there to receive the congratulations of her friends when first she comes to her new home, from that day it remains the seat of honour in the harem.

Fathma was kneeling before the throne, as Turkish etiquette demanded. The Princess requested her to rise, but she politely refused, until the Princess repeated her request.

The Sultana was at first rather timid, but when once I had complied with her request to sit beside her on the bridal throne, we became good friends.

She told me that to sit on a bridal throne would bring me "good luck."

I asked her what she meant by those two magic words.

"A good husband and children," she answered without hesitation.

"That is rare," I said.

"Not in England," she answered; "English husbands are always good!"

.

We talked of many things. The Princess was interested to hear my impressions of Turkey, but she feared it was out of politeness that I admired so many sides of harem life.

"The life of a Turkish princess is so empty," she said. "If only we were allowed to take a part in the life outside the Palace!"

"Western royalties complain of being always on show. A private life, such as you enjoy, is unknown to them."

"Yes, our *rôle* in life is to be hidden. How strange!"

The Princess wanted to hear about the royalties of the West. I knew so much about their life that she supposed I had stayed for some time in the Royal family. That I should have acquired my knowledge from the daily papers seemed incredible to her.

I told her that one day Queen Alexandra, worn out with the work of the season, had said to a lady-in-waiting, "I am so tired, I could just lie down and die."

"Why not bury yourself for a few days in your bed?" said the lady-in-waiting.

"How could I?" asked Queen Alex-

andra ; " what would the Press not make of my indisposition ? ' "

" Think of the joy of being weary from having accomplished something ! " said the Princess : " your Queen knew how disappointed the people would be if she could not keep her appointments. How delightful to feel oneself indispensable ! How many people in Turkey even know that we exist ? " "

I then told the Princess of my visit to Marienbad, and how I had seen England's King dressed like an ordinary citizen, sipping his water and trying as much as possible to pass unnoticed.

The simple life of the then Prince and Princess of Wales, and the care with which they brought up their children, interested her too, and as she had so great a desire to see them I proposed sending her their portraits on picture post cards.

" How strange ! " she said. " I have never had my photograph taken, and yet in England for one penny anybody

can buy a picture of the Sovereign and the Royal family. It all sounds like a beautiful fairy-tale."

.

All the while we spoke the Hasnadar walked in and out. She would have stayed longer, but social duties kept her busy. After one of her visits, however, the Princess turned to me and said :

"The Hasnadar tells me you can shoot wild beasts."

I knew it was not etiquette to contradict a statement made by a princess, however inaccurate, but I could not live up to such a reputation.

"The Hasnadar is mistaken," I said ;
"I once shot a fox."

"How brave of you!" said the Princess.
"Do tell me all about it."

"It was an accident," I said, blushing.

"I also am a sportswoman," went on the Princess ; "I ride."

"In Constantinople?"

"No, in my own park."

Fathma told me afterwards that when the Princess rode, two eunuchs held the pony's head, and yet another served as the advance guard, to clear from the path down which the Princess came, every male gardener or workman who might be lingering there.

Fathma may have exaggerated, but she told the story charmingly. "*Hay-di-guite!*" (Flee, flee!) the eunuch calls as he drives them off like trespassers. It reminded me of the gardener at the convent who had bells attached to his knee, so that the nuns should be warned when he approached and keep away from his dangerous presence.

"Fathma," I said, "if I had been one of those gardeners, I should have hidden in the bushes and taken a peep at the Princess as she passed."

.

Whilst we were speaking some one was fetched—an important somebody evidently, since the slaves touched the

hem of her dress. She was the Princess's *nourrice*, and next to the Hasnadar the most important person in the household.

I thought, when I saw how honoured was this woman, of René Bazin's novel "Donatienne," and how differently the women who take the mother's place in the West are treated. That again is one of the results of the high level on which Mahomet places maternity. When an Eastern woman has to seek assistance in nursing her child, she considers herself under lifelong obligations to that woman, and if a child's first duty is towards the woman who gave him birth, his second duty is towards the woman who nursed him.

The Princess's *nourrice* had been chosen with very great care. She was a healthy, moral woman, and as at the same time she was poor, this gave the Princess's mother an opportunity of discharging a part of her debt. The foster-family took up its residence at the Palace, so that the

nourrice's own child should not be deprived of his mother's milk, and he became known as the Princess's *frère de lait*, a relationship which is considered too near for them to marry each other.

The Princess's *frère de lait* eventually became private secretary to one of her brothers, and when the father died the mother installed herself at the Palace of her nursling.

.

"Would it be rude to request the Hanoum to speak English?" asked the Princess.

"Does your Highness speak English?" I asked.

"No," she said; "although I read it a little, I have never heard it spoken."

What a pathetic request! How could I refuse? Yet how awkward it is to be suddenly called upon to address a Court of women eagerly listening to the sound of a language. I tried to remember

Antony's speech over the dead body of Cæsar—even the 23rd Psalm, the Lord's Prayer, and "God save the King" deserted me in my hour of need. But the Court was waiting; I summoned up all my courage, and began:

"Dear Princess, you will never know the very great pleasure it has been to me to come and see you to-day: I am just revelling in all I see. I wish I were going to stay here for weeks, so that I might wander at leisure from the roof to the kitchen, and from the kitchen to the roof."

I saw the Princess start, so I stopped.

"Very pretty," she said, and changed the conversation at once.

I asked Fathma afterwards what I had said to frighten her.

"You used an awful Turkish word," she said.

"Which?" I asked eagerly.

"I would not dare to tell you."

"You must," I said, beginning the last sentence of my speech again, and watch-

ing her face carefully till I found *kitchen* was the word.

.

But now I have been enlightened; never again in the presence of a Turkish woman will I use that word "kitchen."

"It is in the servants' hall," I answered, when a Turkish woman who was staying with me in London asked what had been done with her wet umbrella. And my *servants' hall* is ten foot by three.

CHAPTER V

THE PRINCESS

AFTER the "kitchen" incident the Princess rose. I imagined it was time for us to go.

But the Sultana, taking me by the hand, led me from the throne to another room, where tea was served.

The Princess was not beautiful, but extremely dainty; dark, sorrowful eyes she had, masses of fair hair, and finely chiselled features. Yet she looked so slight and fragile that a wind such as was blowing that day might have carried her off, and a week of a London season, for which she longed, would certainly have killed her. Her gown was a salmon-pink silk, and its long sweeping train made her look much taller than she really

was. She wore no rings, not even the jewelled ring that is given as a wedding-ring in Turkey ; she had a pearl, however, in either ear, and a rope of pearls round her neck.

Her hands were so exquisite that it would have been a sin to hide them with jewels, and no woman in my country has a foot as small and dainty.

Fathma told me that the Princess had a wonderful collection of shoes—shoes of all ages that had been sent her from all parts of the Empire. Amongst other specimens she possessed picturesque Albanian white-leather laced boots, *babouches*¹ embroidered in all colours, *sabots* studded with stones, and the curious shoes—half babouche, half shoe—worn by the Turkish women in 1830 when they first copied the clothes of the West.

The Princess had a silhouette which would have charmed *Hellen*, so slight was she, yet without one disagreeable

¹ Turkish heelless slippers.

angle. It seemed as though the gods who loved her had given and taken from her form till they had moulded it as near perfection as possible.

The Sultana was a true Oriental, capricious and kind-hearted, bored yet energetic, though too inconsequent to carry out her intentions to a finish, with those many and quickly changing moods which make the Turkish woman so fascinating. Yet what a strength of will there must have been in that little form, and what a pride to carry her through the ocean of suffering that had fallen to her lot!

.

The dining-room in which our tea was served might have been sent direct from Paris, and the china was Sèvres. The table was set for twenty (with how large a *suite* did the Hasnadar imagine I travelled?), and by the side of each plate was an exquisite bouquet of hot-house flowers, which I dared not

admire, lest I should commit a breach of etiquette.

The Princess herself poured out the liquid called "tea," and certainly in that Palace tea-leaves were rarer than pearls. An abundance of good things there was on the table: cakes and *petits fours* from Paris and Vienna were ranged side by side with the delicious *ultra* sweet delicacies of the East, and I politely did full honour to these cosmopolitan dishes.

Again the Princess rose. This time we went to the music-room—large enough to accommodate a whole symphony orchestra.

I was asked to play and sing.

"All Englishwomen play and sing," said the Princess.

"Your Highness is thinking of the German women," I said.

But the Princess would not accept my disclaimer, and fearing she should think me unwilling to please her, I did what I could with some Scotch songs. That

she should have found they resembled the music of the East was a charming manner of interpreting my discordant accompaniment!

After the music was finished we again sat and talked, and I saw to my delight the sun was sinking. Would the Princess notice it? How sincerely I hoped she would not! for if Chocolate were unable to get us home before dark, we should have to stay at the Palace all night. No Turkish woman must be out when the sun has gone to rest.

When Fathma's girl-friends visited us we always tried to put off the moment for saying "good-bye" till the sun had set; then we had them till the next day. In the bottom of the right wing of the harem was a cupboard full of mattresses—emergency beds, which accommodated those friends who stayed when the guests' rooms were already filled. And what delightful little picnics were these! How the unconventionality pleased me! Until the sunlight came peeping through the

latticed windows we used to chatter and laugh, for although the *Dadi* extinguished the candles, who could extinguish the merriment of the guests?

.

After another series of compliments, prompted by etiquette and her own generous heart, the Princess told me her Konak was large, and that if ever I cared to share her simple, lonely existence she would gladly welcome me.

"I will come back," I answered.

"When an Englishwoman really wants anything, her wish can be gratified," said the Princess. "The Englishwoman carves out her own existence; the destiny of an Ottoman princess is in the hands of Allah." And she sailed out of the big hall into the bosom of the Harem.

.

For a long time I should have stood there, had not Chocolate requested us to hurry. As we bid good-bye to the

Hasnadar, I told her I had known her for a long time. She seemed surprised.

“Who does not know the Hasnadar?”

I explained.

“Alas! my life is so empty.”

“A life of devotion is never empty,” I went on. This platitude made her smile, but as we were speaking another group of slaves entered, carrying a coffin-shaped box covered with black and gold embroidery. At a word of command from the head slave of the group they placed it on the table, opened it, and there in the middle of its white satin lining lay Fathma’s yashmak, ironed as it always must be each time it is worn. With nimble fingers it was pinned on again, she was helped into her cloak, and we were again conducted by the head eunuch through the band of assembled slaves and safely placed in the hands of Chocolate.

All the way home Fathma and I never exchanged a word; we were intimate enough to be silent, and nowhere is the beauty of silence better understood

than in Turkey—only on our arrival did I break the silence.

“Thank you, dear Fathma,” I said, kissing her.

“What for, Mihri?”

“For much more than you can ever understand.”

And again there was silence.

.

It was about a week after we had visited the Princess—Fathma and I were going for a drive—when suddenly she asked, “Mihri, why were you so anxious to visit an Ottoman princess—you, who are a socialist?”

I then told her of Melek Hanoum's manuscript which I had in my possession.

“Have you got it with you?”

“Yes,” I said.

“Do let us read it together,” said Fathma; “it will be so interesting to hear another Turkish woman's work; and,” she added after a pause, “it will use up another afternoon, won't it?”

When we returned from our drive and had drunk our coffee, Fathma curled herself up on the most comfortable divan, and there, hidden in a cloud of cigarette smoke, like the true Oriental she is, she listened to the story of the "Ottoman Princess."

PART II

THE OTTOMAN COURT

THE HASNADAR'S IMPRESSIONS

CHAPTER I

THE IMPERIAL BABY

MY task is not an easy one! The tragedy of an Ottoman princess! Who would care to write such a pathetic story? And yet, who in this wide world could describe better than I the sorrowful existence of my most beloved Lioness?¹—she whom I have loved as I would have loved my own child.

To write the life of the Princess Aïché, the favourite daughter of our Imperial master the Sultan, Abdul Hamid, is to write my own life, for I have never left her side since the day when Allah sent her to us. My life has been one of long and faithful service and sincere

¹ *Lioness* : title given to Sultan's daughter.

attachment to the House of Osman. My name is Dilfeza, Hasnadar of the household of the Princess Aïché.

It was one midnight, over twenty years ago now, a beautiful baby in swaddling-clothes was laid in my arms; the second *Cadine* (the Sultan's legitimate wife) had given birth to a daughter, and I was singled out for the honour of being her *Dadi* (nurse). What a darling little thing she was! How I wept for very pride and joy when I saw her! Then straight into my heart the little creature crept, and from that day I have loved my Sultana as I have loved no one else on earth.

It was at the Palace of Tchit in Yildiz Park that I brought up my Princess, under the watchful eye of the Imperial master, to whom I had to give daily reports of the beloved child's health and spirits, documents which his Imperial Majesty examined as carefully as the most important of his papers of State.

"No detail is too insignificant for me to hear, Dilfeza," said he over and over again. "How I love that child! We must build up for her a throne of happiness. . . ."

We built that throne of happiness for Aiché, the Imperial master and I. Alas! we had not calculated with justice and revenge—we had forgotten the dead and martyred Sultan—we never knew till too late how *his* daughter loved *him*.

.

And so on the shores of this beautiful Bosphorus, in the Emerald Palace where we came after the marriage of my beautiful mistress—this lovely Palace, which was to us both such a delightful change after the loneliness of Tchit—one of the most heart-rending of love-tragedies has taken place. Yet the sun still comes peeping in through our latticed windows, the ships pass on to their destinations, the beautiful, wonderful silence is the same—the high walls, the veil, the

108 ABDUL HAMID'S DAUGHTER

Harem are there to protect us from the tragedies of life, but since time immemorial life within these walls has been one long, unending tragedy.

CHAPTER II

THE COURBAN-BAÏRAM

IT is the Courban-Baïram. Cannon have been fired twenty-one times every three hours. The whole town is awake, the Emerald Palace too. What a gorgeous sun has filtered its way through the latticed windows — Allah has accepted the sacrifice of His people.

This morning they killed three hundred sheep. Their plaintive cries were heard as far as the garden of the Selamlik. Ahmed Effendi, head of the Imperial kitchen, was chosen by the Princess as Vekil :¹ to sacrifice three hundred sheep in honour of Abraham, Jesus, Mahomet, and all the sainted Vélis (prophets).

¹ *Vekil*, substitute, the man who kills the lambs in the place of the Sultana.

But I am exhausted! It was still dark when I rose. Carrying my silver candlestick, I went to the Hasné (Treasury); the little slave Ikbal accompanied me. She is so good and sweet that I intend to have her appointed Assistant Treasurer when the first opportunity presents itself.

I picked up my bunch of keys. After saying a "Bismillah"¹ I opened the first door, then the second, then the third, and, followed by Ikbal carrying the candle, we went into the Treasury, my hands smarting from having pushed so many bolts and turned so many heavy keys.

The Treasury was dark. Ikbal lit the two candlesticks which belonged to the hall of the Treasury so that we could see better, and the gold on the cupboards and locks and hinges sparkled in the candlelight.

"Come, Ikbal, bring the light; I can't see," I said. Then I took a key from

¹ *Bismillah*: the prayer which every devout Moslem says before beginning anything.

my bunch and opened the cupboard. There were the Princess's diadem and a necklace to match and a string of pearls. (It is always I who choose the jewels she is to wear.) Also I took out the orders of the Damad (title of Imperial son-in-law), a purse full of gold, and several boxes of jewels for the slaves who were to adorn themselves in honour of this great day, the ermine and sealskin mantle, and a collar of old lace. Then Ikbāl and I closed the Treasury again.

It is not easy to find one's way about. Behind the last door is a dark, damp staircase of about fifteen steps, which leads to a narrow landing where two other staircases begin—one leading to the interior of the Palace and the other to my apartments. Only the door which leads to my apartments is left open; the other is padlocked, and no one can get to the Treasury without first coming to me.

Once back in my own room I looked at the electric register arranged on a kind of black plaque nailed to the wall.

The chief eunuch and Pervine, the Princess's chief maid, had rung. I called the maid first.

Ikbal and I had placed our heavy packages on the divan when Pervine *Tchamachirdji-Ousta*¹ entered.

"Do you want me, Hasnadar?"

"Yes. Come here, my child."

Then, taking out the jewels one by one, I counted them to her. "The emerald necklace and the diadem to match; the pearls for the white dress with the little green flowers which her Highness will wear to-day; the fur coat, the lace collar. And here are your own jewels for to-day's ceremony."

"Thank you, Hasnadar, but can I not be of any further service to you?"

"No, thank you, my child."

When Pervine had gone, I rang again. Five minutes afterwards Djavidane Calfat was in my presence.

"Here are the Pasha's orders and

¹ *Tchamachirdji-Ousta*, Mistress of the Robes. All the persons at the Court are slaves.

shoulder-knots. To-day his Excellency must not be late in appearing before his Imperial father-in-law."

Next I rang for Dilaver, the chief eunuch.

"What are your commands, divine Hasnadar?"

"Be serious, Dilaver Agha. The open carriage for the Damad in two hours' time, please. The closed landau lined with white satin for her Highness at six o'clock. Four *aghas* (eunuchs)—you one of them—and four *sais* (grooms) to accompany her; six carriages for her suite and twelve *sais* to accompany them. All the carriages to be ready before the door at half-past five. At six the Sultana must start; at four the sheep must be sacrificed—and please entrust the distribution of the meat¹ to a reliable person."

"Yes, Hasnadar, but can I not be of further service to you?"

¹ According to his wealth, the Turk sacrifices sheep. At least once a year the poor Turk has meat, which he makes into sausages, etc., so that he can prolong the enjoyment of eating meat.

“No, thank you, Dilaver Agha.”

“My soul is yours, beautiful Hasnadar.”

He made a deep bow and disappeared.

CHAPTER III

LA PRINCESSE SE LÈVE

NOW I must think of the Sultana. Is she up yet? I dare not somehow go and wake her. I worship my beloved Princess. She is almost like my own child, but she is commanding, and her wide-awake eyes have, from time to time, a far-away look which terrifies me. I would not dare to think of her as the destroying angel of the House of Osman, and yet sometimes I am afraid.

Some one knocks: it is Pervine again.

"Her Highness has expressed the wish to see your rosy visage," she said.

"Thank her Highness for her command; I am coming."

I quickly tidied myself. "Alas! alas! Dilfeza, Controller of the household of

her Imperial Highness Aïché Sultana, you are getting old," I said to myself whilst arranging my hair; then I hurried towards the Princess's apartments.

It is not etiquette to knock when the Princess has sent for me, so I turn the handle slowly, to let her know I am coming. Then I enter, and, following the etiquette, I make the first *temenah*¹ at the door, the second in the middle of the room, and the third very near her.

"Good morning, Dilfeza; not so much ceremony, please," she said.

She was in her bed of purple and gold, and as high as her throne.

"Kiss me, Dilfeza; you're just dying to kiss your little girlie, aren't you?"

I gladly listened to her childish tenderness.

"Yes, dear Princess, I love to kiss my own child."

So I walked up the steps, took her in my arms, and with all the love I had for her in my heart I kissed her, and it

¹ *Temenah*, Eastern salutation.

seemed for a moment we were back at Yildiz, and she was again my own little girl.

"It is time to rise, Highness. You must dress quickly. You are going to see our master shortly."

"How all that bores me!" she cried.

"Hush, hush! my Princess. What bores you?"

"To have to *selam* to my father."

"Hush, hush!" I repeated.

She laughed like a little child.

"Yes, yes, and again yes," she said; "it bores me to extinction."

"A princess must not use such language," I answered.

"A princess is a human being, after all, Dilfeza, and when anything bores her she says so—that is all."

I laughed too. She was so pretty and fresh and young. How was it possible to connect her with the House of Osman?

"Princess, dear Princess, you must be reasonable, and rise."

"Yes, yes, I will. But how cold it is!"

"Everything is ready. The *Tchama-chirdji-Ousta* has your emeralds and the mantle. But your Highness must rise."

"Now, Dilfeza, you can call Pervine."

I rang the bell.

I was backing out of the Imperial presence, and had made my third *temenah*.

"Dilfeza, stay!" she called.

I stayed as she ordered me.

"To-day," she said, "my cousin the Sultana Leyla is coming to see me for the first time since her marriage. Put plenty of flowers in the pink *salon*. I shall receive her there."

CHAPTER IV

THE SULTAN VISITS THE HAREM

ALTHOUGH I do not accompany my mistress during *Bairam*, I know the Court etiquette by heart—yes, indeed, it is somewhat boring. My Princess was wearing her ivory satin dress. The long train was fastened to her waist with a big diamond pin, and her emerald necklace was round her neck. In her hair a big white muslin bow showed up the beauty of her priceless emeralds. Now I see them throwing over her shoulders the feridgi of snow-white Broussa silk, and she is so beautiful, my Princess, in her white yashmak and mantle, and her great eyes seem to look so far away.

Dilaver, Giaffer, Yaver, Moukbil, Nervasse, and Haidar, the six eunuchs in her

service, are waiting at the door. The Sultana comes down by the grand staircase. Pervine, also veiled, offers her arm. The Bach-Calfat¹ holds her fan and her little bag. Peyvesti walks behind her. In the hall forty assembled slaves, twenty each side, dressed six by six in the same colour, bow as the Sultana passes. Dilaver takes the Sultana's arm and leads her to the carriage.

At Yildiz the same ceremony has to be continued. The slaves surround her; the young ones kiss the hem of her train and the others her hands. A host of clever fingers take off her feridgi and yashmak, and lower her train, and finally the Hasnadar leads her into the presence of the Validé Sultana, her grandmother.

The Validé Sultana is seated in a large red-damask arm-chair in the big hall of the Kiosk. Aïché Sultana halts at the threshold and makes a deep bow, another in the middle of the room, and the third at the feet of the Validé Sultana, who

¹ The Bach-Calfat is the title of the head slave.

takes her hand and affectionately kisses her forehead. The same ceremonial must be continued before the first, second, third, and fourth Cadines (wives of the Sultan).

A little before noon the signal is given that his Majesty has arrived at the Harem. The Sultan is coming. . . . A thrill goes through the assembly. On either side of the Validé, Cadines and Sultanas are grouped.

"The master is coming. The Emperor of the Faithful, the Shadow of Allah on Earth, the Prophet's successor, the Master of Masters, the Elect of the Elect, our Majesty, our King, long may he live!" announces the chief eunuch. "Behold him who is the glory of the House of Osman!"

The Sultan is coming. Now he enters the *salon* with the red-damask furniture, walks between the bowed heads of the women towards his mother, kneels, and kisses her hand.

"Blessed be the Emperor of the Faithful, the Master of Masters, the Elect of

the Elect, the Shadow of God upon Earth," murmurs the Validé.

"A thousand lives be thine, O our Master!" say the other women.

Then he stands beside the Validé, his face turned towards the door, and one by one the women, beginning with his wives and daughters, kneel and bow almost to the ground.

"Rise!" monotonously commands the Imperial master.

It is a tiresome and unnecessary ceremony, and the Sultan receives the homage of his womenkind as quickly as possible. Rarely does he converse with either his wives or daughters, except perhaps to ask them what visitors have been to the Palace, in order to see if the answers given correspond with the reports of the secret police, for his own daughters are spied on like the least of his subjects.

About an hour after the ceremony at Yildiz the gates of our park are again opened. The Princess has returned. A

bell which rings all over the Palace has summoned the slaves, who wait in two rows; the negroes too are in their places.

I had quickly put on my state robe and was standing in my place at the head of the slaves. Our mistress walks up the staircase, assisted by Dilaver. We all bow very low as she passes; then I follow her into her room, where she quickly has her veil removed and throws herself down wearily on a divan.

"Well, my Lioness, I hope you are not too tired!" I said to her to-day.

"A little," she answered.

"I hope their Majesties are well?"

"My Imperial father was a little pale to-day; he scarcely spoke to the Validé and the Cadines; the ceremonial at Bechiktache always tires him."

"And your august grandmother?"

"The Validé is well, she was even gay this morning. But you should have seen the fourth *Cadine*—she is more beautiful than ever."

"It is difficult to imagine her more beautiful."

"How do you like my dress? I am not very pleased with Sophia's work," said the Princess, changing the subject.

The Sultana rose and walked towards a big mirror; first she looked at herself front view, then side view, then three-quarter view.

"Your Highness is just exquisite," I said, and I spoke the truth.

"I want to be particularly beautiful to-day for Leyla. She is considered the most elegant of the Sultanas. Since she has begun to receive, every one is speaking of her charm and intelligence."

"Leyla Sultana could not be compared with you," I said.

"She eclipses me, Dilfeza; have you noticed her eyes?"

"She is older than your Highness."

"Yes; she was born a year after the seclusion of her father—she is twenty-six."

"She appears less."

"I admire Leyla—she is some one."

Have you forgotten her as a child when she used to come to Yildiz? Do you remember how Esma-Hikmet and I begged her to come and play with us, but she always refused? 'I don't wish to play with Sultanas,' she would reply.—'But you are also a Sultana.'—'No. I am not.'—'You are the Sultan's niece.'—'I will not be the Sultan's niece,' she would answer. She wouldn't laugh, and she wouldn't play."

I listened attentively.

"One day, when she was about fifteen," went on the Princess, "she said to me: 'Aïché, are you still your father's favourite?'—'Yes,' I replied proudly.—'Well, I shall love you too. I always love those whom your father loves,' and she chuckled. How strange her words appeared!"

Still I did not answer.

"The other day at her wedding she was magnificent," continued Aïché. "I had not seen her for some time. She kissed me tenderly. 'Dear cousin,' she said,

‘I hope to see you very often now we are neighbours. Are you still the Sultan’s favourite daughter?’—‘Yes,’ I replied.—‘I must come and congratulate you, then.’ Dilfeza, my cousin is strange, I assure you. Watch, and you will see it yourself.”

CHAPTER V

LEYLA VISITS HER COUSIN

WHEN the Sultana Leyla visited us the day before yesterday, the whole Palace was in a state of excitement. She is quite as beautiful as the Princess Aïché had led us to suppose, but I cannot define the strange impression she made on me.

About ten her carriage was announced. Two magnificent white horses, harnessed to an elegant *coupé*, drove in, and two negroes on horseback followed. It was I who went to meet her, the slaves taking their places in two lines, as was the custom. Yaver helped her out of her carriage.

I was astonished at her dress. A black

velvet feridgi covered her entirely. She was tall and slight, and from under her yashmak peeped out her red hair; there was a look almost of tragedy in her eyes.

In the veiling-room I was standing near her, and when the little slaves had removed her yashmak and feridgi, and her train was let down, I saw her dress too was black. I felt indignant. Never do Sultanas wear black. It is unlucky. Why had she done this?

Following the etiquette, I stepped forward, offered my arm, and led her to the *salon* where the Sultana Aïché was to receive her.

We crossed the hall, slowly went up the staircase, and as we went I said to her :

"I am so pleased to meet your Highness. My mistress has often spoken of you."

"My cousin is very fond of me, I believe," she replied.

Princess Aïché came to meet us. The

black surprised her. I saw her fine eyebrows meet discontentedly and her diadem trembled just a little—but only I would notice such details—as she stretched out her hands to welcome her cousin.

What a contrast they were, these two Princesses!—my mistress, graceful, slender, with narrow shoulders, reserved and timid; Leyla, a head taller, walked with assurance. The one was pale with fair hair; the other, entirely dressed in black, had hair the colour of fire.

Much as I wanted to, I could not stay with them. Visitor after visitor arrived.

“Hasnadar of my heart,” Dilaver announces, “the Grand Vizier’s wife is here.”

I hasten to greet her. I receive the lady with all the honour due to her rank. I help her take off her yashmak; she has coffee. I ask her for news of her family, and escort her upstairs to the Sultana. Then I come back, ask the same questions and go through the same ceremony with each new arrival.

From time to time I hide in my own room. A mad longing to remain alone seizes me, but hardly have I settled when some one knocks at the door.

"Dilfeza Calfat, the Home Secretary's wife is here, the Foreign Secretary's wife, and others."

Heavens! how monotonous it is having the same conversation with all these ladies:

"Am I happy to find you in perfect health?"

"Thanks to Allah, and to the Sultan, our beloved master, and the Imperial House, I am well."

"And your dear children?"

"Thank you, they are in perfect health."

"And his Excellency the Pasha?"

"Thanks to Allah, he is better. He has cured his cold and begun work again."

"And when do you think of marrying Esma Hanoum?"

"Soon. Inschallah! purest Hasnadar."

.

The Sultana Leyla remained until the evening and helped Aïché receive. The little slave who was on duty told me that two visitors, coming to the Emerald Palace for the first time, had saluted Princess Leyla, supposing she was my Princess, and that Princess Leyla had answered angrily :

“There is the Sultana Aïché. I am only her cousin.”

Why this bitterness?

Before sunset, when the last visitors had left, Sultana Leyla asked that her carriage should be called.

“You will come often and see me, dear Leyla, won't you?” said Princess Aïché affectionately, as she escorted her cousin downstairs.

Leyla Sultana smiled, and her beautiful white teeth were visible through her veil.

“I intend to come so often, dear cousin, that you will wish you hadn't asked me.”

“That day will never come—you know I am very fond of you.”

"You do not know me yet, cousin."

"I am sure you will not deceive me. In the meantime, I believe in you," said Aïché Sultana, laughing, "and I shall hope to see you often. Come soon, Leyla."

"Very soon, Aïché; *au revoir*."

In order to kiss her cousin she let her yashmak slip, and her mouth, looking like a red fruit between her white veils, scarcely touched Aïché's cheeks; then, quickly, she lifted her mantle, and before the negroes had time to help her she had run down the steps alone.

Long after she had driven out of the park I was still watching: the Princess was watching too.

"Is your Highness waiting for something?" I asked, walking up to her.

"No; I was thinking, and forgot I was here."

What a sad expression she had! Poor child! How I wished at that moment she was an ordinary human being, and not a princess. I would just have taken

her in my arms and said to her, "You are unhappy, my dear one; won't you tell me all about it?"

Many strange things have I seen during my existence in the Imperial Harem, closed though it be to the whirl and hurry of the outer world. I have been the spectator of many tragedies, and in these glass houses, where the plants are living women, I have heard the whole scale of unhappiness played.

In this Palace, in the midst of all these women, whose one desire is to please "the master," I have often felt that my child might feel lonely, that she might perhaps suffer, and I wanted to be her friend. I said to myself, "Should she need the devotion of a heart and a life, I will give them to her." Aïché has understood my affection, and has in turn loved me. As a child she came to me with all her woes, and I tried to help her; for the sake of my Princess I cursed my ignorance and

the captivity in which I have been destined to live; only in order to teach her and to help form her mind and character did I wish to acquire knowledge.

When she was about eight, governesses came to teach her. I wept for days together. It seemed to me as if they were stealing her from me. Would she not find me insignificant compared to the friends who came to see her? I said to myself.

But no! She always came back to me more affectionate and loving than ever, and she seemed to understand my distress.

"My dear Dilfeza, why have you never taken the trouble to learn these things? You would have understood them so well and so quickly."

"Perhaps, my Princess, perhaps. . . ."

CHAPTER VI

LOVE-MARRIAGE OF PRINCESS AÏCHE

THE Princess Aïché made a love-marriage, and it was all so strange and unexpected that it seemed doubly out of harmony in its austere surroundings.

Aïché since her childhood had had a playmate, Edhem, two years her senior. He was the son of the first Master of Ceremonies, and he came to play at Yildiz with the little Sultanas.

At twelve, when the Princess was veiled, her young friend was still allowed to visit her. The whole Palace was scandalized, the Validé, the Cadines, the slaves, the negroes, and even I could not understand why this exception had been made.

But one day the Sultan, our master, summoned me into his presence; and after having put on my best gown, I went to obey his Majesty's command.

"Dilfeza," he said, "perhaps you are astonished at the breach of etiquette which I have made for Aïché, and perhaps you think she ought to be veiled and secluded like the others, and that it is wrong to let my child laugh and play with that boy. But, come closer, Dilfeza, and listen—I am going to marry my daughter to Edhem later on. She shall choose the husband she loves ; never before has such a thing been possible for a member of the House of Osman."

I trembled and could not answer.

"You are deeply moved, Dilfeza," went on his Majesty. "So am I. You know Aïché is the one person I love. Several times I have asked myself whether, like other men, I have that something which is called the heart, and which dictates all good actions. Possibly not, and yet I am not sure, Dilfeza ; when I look at my

daughter, and when I see her smile, there is nothing I would not do to make her happy, and my aim is to build a throne of happiness for her."

This news upset me altogether, but I was happy—very happy. I could not sit still. I ran about in the Palace from right to left, having only one thought by day and by night: "Aïché was to be happy."

Each week Edhem Pasha came to the Palace. Under my watchful maternal eye they read and talked and played the piano to one another. I looked at them, listened to them; the pure and simple delight of their expression made me almost weep with joy.

And so months and years passed. Aïché was now no longer a child. Her hands began to taper and her waist grew slender. Edhem, too, had become a young man, and the harmony there was between these two beings was evident. I, who was always present at their meetings, felt more and

more the happiness that was coming to them.

Sometimes, when Edhem went away, Aïché would come and nestle up beside me in the Yildiz Park, and together we would watch the green grass under the shadow of the poplar and birch trees. I respected her silence, but from time to time she would raise her head and speak of things far away from her real thoughts, and I, during the silences, listened to the quick beating of her heart.

All this time the Imperial Harem continued its useless and unnecessary ceremonial. The Cadines died of ennui; the slaves were occupied exclusively with Court intrigues and treachery; princesses were born, others died.

The Baïrams, New Year fêtes, the months of fasting, follow each other. These festivities are but faint echoes of what they are in the town, but we, weary of the monotony of our existence, look forward to these almost happy days. It is at these times that the town ladies pay

visits to the Palace, which are an excuse for new dresses, new coiffures, and sometimes a drive to the Palace of Stamboul—a drive to which we look forward a long time in advance.

.

Aïché had now grown into a charming woman, with grave deep eyes, delicate red lips, and all her movements were graceful.

It was on her nineteenth birthday that his Imperial Majesty, the Sultan, commanded me to his presence.

“The time has come, Dilfeza,” he said; “I shall now marry Aïché and Edhem, and I know they love one another very dearly.”

CHAPTER VII

LEYLA SULTANA'S FASCINATIONS

L EYLA SULTANA comes very often now. She stays to dinner with Aïché, and plays the piano to her. All the slaves love Leyla Sultana, for she knows how to charm every one. To the humblest of them all she speaks with a smile so sweet that one would imagine her to be in the presence of a friend. Even with the negro Dilaver she makes herself popular.

One day I remember I was discussing a new method of hairdressing which had greatly attracted me. She listened attentively, and the next day dressed her own hair in that way to please me. Every time she comes she brings books of new

music, sits down at the piano, and plays to her cousin for hours. To the slaves she gives sweets, to the negroes cigarettes ; when her carriage is announced the whole Palace is *en fête*.

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I am afraid. I distrust this continual smiling and this forced amiability. I detest those long tapering fingers, that fiery hair, and those dark eyes which never twice tell the same story.

When Leyla is at the Emerald Palace there is no peace of mind for me. To feel that she is with Aïché makes my blood run cold. Every now and then I stand at the *salon* door and listen—my heart beats quickly ; it seems to me as though Aïché were calling me, and as though she wanted me to save her from danger. Then sometimes, when I can bear it no more, I open the door and walk into the *salon*.

Aïché's favourite *salon* is of Byzantine architecture, with a large gold dome,

and narrow gold columns supporting it; the windows are narrow and latticed. I generally find them there, Leyla playing the piano or chatting in a low voice, Aïché busily embroidering, listening with her head bent over her work. The calm tranquillity of the two makes me tremble; I cannot explain the anxiety; I excuse myself to the two young women, find some explanation for my indiscreet interruption, and go away again.

But I do not go to my own room. All the time that Leyla is there I am watching. I am like a tigress protecting her young, and only when Leyla's *coupé* is before the door and the negroes have helped her in is my mind a little easier.

After she has gone I begin to wonder what I ought to do. I try to find out all I can. I question Aïché about her cousin. Aïché answers me that she is kindness itself, that she is sweet and thoughtful, and indeed all that is to be

desired, for she is now so completely under the influence of Leyla's charm and intelligence that she looks forward with delight to these visits.

I say nothing. I can only wait.

CHAPTER VIII

THE YOUTH OF LEYLA SULTANA

SUPPOSING Leyla Sultana be wicked and vindictive ; supposing she be capable of every crime under the sun—after all, has she not every excuse ? Since that idea has come to me, I feel that I am going mad.

Leyla Sultana is twenty-six years old. She came into a world full of sorrow, and has never known anything else. No one ever saw her smile till the day of her wedding ; therefore I say to myself that her smile is not natural.

Up till the death of her father, the Sultan Mourad, she was kept with him in perpetual seclusion, hated and despised by the entourage of Abdul Hamid. Thus

she knew almost every detail of the tragedy, which started from the time when her father sat on the Osman throne until his death. She knew her uncle's hatred for her father, the solitary prisoner. One wife lived in the small prison palace, and there Leyla was born.

Thus it was she knew that terrible life-story from end to end; the atrocious injustice, the continual and unrelieved suffering of the father she loved—that cultured, affectionate man, who for so many years had mingled his tears with those of his wife and child.

When Leyla was young, she was sometimes taken to the Imperial Palace to play with her little cousins, the Sultanas. By continually living with a suffering father, however, she had no heart to play; so she went back to her captivity, and was almost forgotten. But one day the captive Sultan passed away in her arms. No doctor attended him. He had been sinking for some time, but he made no effort to struggle out of the grasp of death.

For what had he to live? He drifted to death.

Leyla, who had loved him passionately, mourned bitterly for him. With her mother, however, much aged since her imprisonment, she was sent to the Imperial Palace, and there they occupied some humble position, until a few years later Leyla was married to an unimportant official, and came to live in a palace near my mistress.

CHAPTER IX

AN IMPOSSIBLE FRIENDSHIP

AS I said before, the Leyla we know has nothing in common with the Leyla of the past.

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As I think and think over her life I become almost terrified. Then I compare her existence with that of Aïché—so tenderly cared for, so loved, so happy—and I say to myself they are both of the same blood, and if Leyla is no longer an Emperor's daughter, it is because Aïché's father usurped the throne. The hateful injustice of it all is only too apparent. . . .

.

How I dislike this friendship between the two Sultanas! It is useless from Aïché's point of view, and false from Leyla's. How can Leyla be expected to forgive the Sultana Aïché's happiness? Always must she have before her the memory of her own father, whom Aïché's father killed, and to see them together, two fair daughters of rival Sultans—two brothers—to see them together, laughing and smiling and loving each other, seems to me such a strange irony of fate, such a strange end to the hatred which must have passed into their blood, that my very heart seems to burn when I think of it.

And yet I try to persuade myself that their friendship is true. They are both women leading equally monotonous existences. They understand each other, they work together, read together, and discuss what they have read. They consult each other as to how to dress their hair, the clothes they shall wear, and the different alterations they must make in their palaces. They give one another trinkets, em-

broideries, and flowers. I know every detail of this friendship; I take part in their conversation; I put up with their occasional teasing, but I make no comment, not daring to endanger a friendship which may be sincere.

CHAPTER X

THE IMPRUDENCE OF PRINCESS AÏCHÉ

TO-DAY, as usual, Leyla came early in the afternoon.

It was Friday, the day of the Selamlık. I walked casually into the big *salon*, and, to my utter horror, between Aïché and Leyla, seated on a low chair, his aristocratic fingers playing with a ball of silk, sat Edhem Pasha, the husband of my child!

I started.

Peals of laughter followed, and my Princess said to her husband:

“The shock of seeing you here in my salon and my cousin unveiled will kill Dilfeza. But listen, my dear old friend,” she went on, turning to me. “Haven’t the townspeople the right to

see their relations unveiled? Yes, of course; they have, and aren't we as good as the townsfolk? I see no reason why my husband should not see Leyla. When I am with one, I have to deprive myself of the society of the other. In this manner I can enjoy the company of both at the same time!"

"I was only surprised to see his Excellency here," I answered.

"Yes, I know, you dear old Dilfeza, everything that the Protocol forbids is odious to you. You are a sweet, obedient, submissive soul, but I—I, you know, am revolution incarnate. . . ."

I had forgotten to tell the lies I had invented to explain my presence amongst them. Besides, Aïché was eagerly discussing certain slavish laws of the Palace etiquette, whilst Edhem Pasha was seconding her, and Leyla coquettishly, but mistress of herself, was smiling and showing her pearly white teeth.

I just heard that I was asked to order tea and syrup—then I left the *salon*.

All day I have been anxious. This is the beginning of something.

It is night! I am writing to ease the agony that is in my soul—that “obedient soul” Aïché called it a short while ago—that soul which has revolted till the white hairs have come to show the uselessness of further revolt.

All around me is silent. Aïché and Edhem are already asleep. Before the Palace gate an armed negro and an Albanian have taken up their night watch. I go my round, shut the doors, put out the lights, and order the slaves to bed. I set the alarm bells, which ring all over the Palace at the least danger, in connection with my room. Then, my daily work being over, I pray.

I do not often pray. It seemed to me Allah had forgotten me long ago. When I was a little girl He did not hear my tiny voice pleading with Him to save me from being sold; He did not listen

to the wild ravings of a heart yearning for affection ; no, no, He has forgotten me for so long now. Yet of late years I have begun to think of Him again. The young slaves whom I am training must believe in Allah—be taught of a future happiness to make them accept this life. Then my own lips began to echo their prayers, and I remembered those my mother taught me.

As an old woman I have come back to Allah, and now that I am suffering, and there is no one who can share my sorrow, I pray with fervour, though my heart revolts, to this forgetful Allah, and when I have wept and prayed, and prayed and wept, an extraordinary freshness seems to steal over my whole being, and it seems to me I suffer less.

But this evening my prayers have brought no peace to my soul. I walk up and down. My room is almost dark : a solitary candle burns on the table ; there is my narrow bed in the corner,

with its white coverings, and the Broussa silk tapestry shows strange forms in the dim light. My prayer-carpet is on the floor; before the window is my table. Here it is I sit and watch the big vessels sailing along the Bosphorus, far away to where I cannot follow them, even in imagination. There is another window to my left, however—a dark window, whence I see the narrow garden where the young slaves play—a garden so enclosed that there is neither air nor outlook. A very high wall surrounds it, and no door has been made in this mass of stone, lest escape should be possible. All the plants are green, the pathways narrow and damp, and the rose-trees at the end of May are covered with blooms. Yes, the garden is sad, without any particular reason for being so, since there are trees and flowers and the sky stretches over us its lovely blue.

From my window I can see two completely different aspects of existence. On

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the one side is the Bosphorus, with its movement and life, so near to us, awakening all our hopes ; on the other side, the Palace garden, the pall of all our dreams.

CHAPTER XI

THE TRAGEDY OF DJAVIDANE CALFAT

TO-DAY, Djavidane Calfat came to my room.

It was early in the morning. The slaves had not yet risen. I was alone when the door opened, and Djavidane, pale and her eyes red with crying, entered.

“May I be allowed to speak to you?” she asked.

“Yes, my child ; what is it?”

“Shall I shut the door?”

Before I could answer, she had drawn the bolt and locked the door.

“Now, listen to me, please, Hasnadar,” she said, kneeling beside me. “Do you trust me?”

“Yes, Djavidane ; remember, it is I who have brought you up.”

I waited in silence, when suddenly she rose, laid her head on my shoulder, and sobbed as though her heart would break.

Djavidane was one of my favourite slaves. I admired her frankness and loyalty; above all, her calm, quiet nature.

For her to come thus and weep in my arms! Surely there must be some deep-seated cause for her misery.

It was I who, when Aiché married, had chosen Djavidane for the particular service of Edhem Pasha, preferring her to all the other slaves because she was without physical charm and of a well-balanced mind and healthy temperament.

"What is the matter, my child?" I said. "Tell me all your trouble."

The tears had ceased to flow. With her poor thin hands she was drying her eyes, and with her closed lips she had an expression of unending sorrow. When she was calmer she once more knelt beside me, and with sobs still in her voice told me: "I love Edhem

Pasha, our master, the Sultana Aïché's husband ! ”

Slowly the words seemed to penetrate into my mind.

“What is the matter, Djavidane ? ” I asked.

“I said that I loved Edhem Pasha,” she said, with redoubled emphasis, “and I am suffering in consequence : that is all.”

I rose from my seat.

“Do you understand the gravity of what you are saying ? ”

“Yes,” she answered. “I know that were the Sultana to know of my love for her husband, she would have me killed. To love the master as I love him must one day touch his heart, and that would cause all kinds of misery.”

“Are you quite sane, Djavidane ? ” I asked.

She looked at me and smiled—a pale, tortured smile.

“I am not mad,” she answered ; “alas, no, I am not mad ! I have laid bare my poor wretched soul to you, who

are 'so good and kind, and ask you what I ought to do. Save me, Dilfeza, save me!"

She took my hands and clasped them in her own.

"Save me, cure me, make me forget; give me back my childhood's peace."

"Djavidane, tell me how long you have loved him?"

"I cannot say," she answered. "I think it is since the day I first saw him walking up the grand staircase with the Sultana. Then you placed me in his service. I was calm then, but one day, one morning, a few weeks after the marriage, he was dressing in his room. I had to fetch something, and, seeing me, he held out his hand and said, showing me his shirt: 'Here's a button coming off; would you sew it on?'"

"I ran to fetch a needle and cotton, then came and sat down beside him. He stretched out his arm, the sleeve of which needed mending, and I placed it on my knee and began to sew. Our hands did

not meet, but he moved his arm, and his fingers just passed over mine. I cried out as if in pain.

“‘What is the matter?’ he asked anxiously; ‘did you prick yourself?’

“‘Yes, your Excellency must excuse me,’ I answered, quickly plunging the needle through the stuff into my flesh as far as the bone.

“The blood flowed freely. Edhem Pasha was alarmed. He showed my finger to the Sultana, who came running when she heard my cry.

“‘Poor little girl! it is too bad, and I am the cause of it all,’ he said, as together they bound up my finger. Then I left them.

“What a long, long distance my room seemed from theirs! I reached it, however, supporting myself against the wall. I felt as if a heavy weight were on my head; my heart was beating as it had never done before; my whole being seemed in agony. From that day I knew I loved him.”

Seeing I remained silent, she continued:

“Every day I see him—it is I who am most with him. How I suffer! Sometimes I want to throw myself at his feet and tell him all—but I am too terrified, and I should die if it were known. Then, again, I love the Sultana; she is good and kind, and it is not her fault.”

As I was still silent, she asked:

“Why do you not answer, Dilfeza? Is it my fault that I love him? He is the only man I know, the only man I have ever approached. He is young and handsome and kind. Dilfeza, tell me, is it a crime to love him?”

“Yes, my child, it is very, very wrong. Besides, it is useless, and it makes you suffer.”

“It is not useless,” she answered gravely. “I have an unknown joy in loving him, even though I suffer. And when I am cured, I ask myself how I shall live when this love is taken from me.”

The matter about which Djavidane had been speaking was much more serious than I had at first supposed. It worried me intensely, for I could not think what I ought to do to end it.

"You will have to leave Edhem Pasha's service," I told her.

"No, no, that is impossible," said Djavidane, looking straight at me. "I could not live without seeing him and hearing his voice."

I did not consider Djavidane ugly that morning. Her usually expressionless brown eyes had now a brilliancy which rendered them really beautiful, her thin lips had a look of sweet sorrow, and her face a pathetic pallor. She had a charm which I had never noticed before.

"Well, Djavidane, what are you going to do?" I asked, taking her hands in mine in affectionate pity.

"Nothing," she answered; "to have told you how I am suffering has been a great relief to me. I shall go on living with this secret eating out my heart

I swear to you I will try not to be weak—if I am, you must save me. A little while ago I asked you to cure me: that is impossible; help me to live, that is all!”

I took her in my arms; she was now crying like a sick child, but her tears had not the bitterness of a little while before. Then suddenly she kissed me, and without a word she unlocked the door and walked out, leaving me alone with her secret.

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Did Djavidane's confession after all astonish me? Had I been her age and leading the life she was obliged to lead, I too would have been capable of similar madness. But her daily suffering, the bitterness which must result from it, caused me intense pain. I knew, too, that the monotony of the Palace, the slavery, the captivity in these gilded halls and the narrow park could not cure her. To have as sole pastime embroidery and songs accompanied by the young slaves

on the *oud* and the *cavta*¹; to live months without seeing a fresh face; to wait with impatience the return of the fête-days, to receive visits from town ladies; to see the ships passing by our windows; to watch the sun rise in the east and set in the west; to try several forms of hairdressing and new costumes as the amusement of amusements; to eat every day at the same time; to feel nothing vibrating, living, perfecting itself around one; to read always the same monotonous books—Persian poetry or the Arabian Nights of a thousand years ago; to know nothing of what the multitude thinks outside these prison walls—never even to go on the water which we see from our windows, or to wander in the forests of which the townspeople speak, or to see one of those great cities of which we hear; to be a silent impersonal being, with no place in the world whatever—how is it possible with these surroundings to cure a maiden lovesick for the only

¹ Turkish string instruments.

man she has ever met and whom she meets every day, the one being in the Palace who may bear on his gilded uniform the dust of the roads, and in his voice and in his eyes something of the great life going on outside?

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This morning I found Princess Aïché all smiles. Edhem was seated near her. How young and handsome they looked! How happy!

For the first time I felt the injustice of their calm felicity, and realized what sacrifice of others' happiness it meant—the sacrifice of all the lives within these walls; these young women who would go to their grave lonely, unloved, and withering slowly of monotony and grief, so that *one* only might live and love and dream to her heart's content. I thought of the poor Albanians and negroes who had to watch all night at the Palace doors, and the others who had to carry life's heavy burden so that *one only* should live in

peace and comfort,—and it made me sad indeed.

In the next room I heard the brisk step which announced that Djavidane was there. She too heard my voice; she knew that I should have to hide my anxiety as she would have to hide her love. My thoughts seemed to be wandering all the while Aïché was speaking to me.

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It felt as if the day were going to be hot; the windows were open, and between the lattices the sea could be seen sparkling like molten gold. In the room where Aïché and Edhem sat together the flowers which had been brought for them exhaled a heavy perfume. Aïché was clad in white, her dress cut in such a way as to show her slight, supple figure to the best advantage. Edhem Pasha, tall and handsome in his general's uniform, was walking up and down the room, smiling every now and again at Aïché,

who was speaking to me. I stayed for a very short time that day. As a rule I liked to listen to them talking and laughing, but this morning I could not stay ; I seemed to be at the mercy of a restless feeling which alternately sent me in the direction of this loving couple and then sent me away again.

I invited Djavidane to breakfast. But what was I to say to her ? From afar I could see her hollow eyes, her face stamped with sorrow, yet I could not comfort her ; and all the afternoon I wandered about without knowing what to think of all that was going on around me.

CHAPTER XII

THE DREARY, DREARY ROUND

SINCE Leyla Sultana has come so often to see my mistress I have learnt a great deal; yet I believe I regret my lost ignorance. To know everything, or even a great deal, would be out of the question for me, for I am old, and at certain moments my mind seems to stop.

First of all, it was the Hodja-Hanoum,¹ who taught the little slaves to read, who came and worked regularly with me; she did not know very much more than I, it is true, but it is easier for two to work than one, and so the Sultana's books, which for so long I had dusted, were now of use to me.

¹ *Hodja-Hanoum*, teacher of the Koran.

One day, when I told the Sultana that at last I understood, she said: "It is not from books, my dear Dilfeza, that we can learn to live—neither you nor I will ever know what living means."

"That is true, dear Princess," I answered; "neither you, glory of the Osmans, nor I, her Hasnadar, shut up in this Palace, will ever know what it is to live."

And so I felt I would like to tear up the books. What had they taught me? It seemed to me I was happier before I began reading.

I know the shape of the world at present—Moukbil and Dilaver can no longer laugh at me because of my ignorance—but I am a wiser and a sadder woman.

There are many lands and languages and seas and plains and forests—there is love and sorrow and war. There are many countries where men and women are born free, freer than ever our masters and superiors have been. I have learnt

all this, and the knowledge of it makes me wretched.

“Matmozelle Hosephine”¹ comes no more. The Sultana is tired of the piano, which stands closed in her *salon*.

“I wish I could have continued the lessons, Hasnadar,” the little Giaour² said, weeping, as she left the Palace.

“Well, you couldn’t give piano lessons to me, could you?” I answered; then she began to laugh—the idea of seeing me seated at the piano playing seemed to fill her with merriment.

I was not cross, although all the slaves and negroes present joined in the laughter, because it consoled the little Giaour.

There’s another person whose life is a sealed book to me. She came often, but never spoke a word about herself. For hours she played to the Sultana. I listened to her playing, her nimble little fingers running up and down the keys—then another time Aïché herself would play and the little Giaour would listen, making

¹ Negro pronunciation.

² Heathen.

the Princess begin again and again when it did not please her, and my mistress obeyed her. I never could understand how it was that a princess of the House of Osman could take her orders from this little girl, and one day when I told her so she said :

“Hosephine is a magnificent pianist, Dilfeza; she knows a good deal more about the piano than I.”

A few months before, I should have revolted at the idea, but the “Big Book”¹ in the first chapter teaches us we must listen to others. “Ah, Dilfeza,” I said to myself, “I preferred you when your bejewelled head, covered with gauze and flowers, was devoid of thought and knowledge. What has been the use of your learning? How many things have now disappeared from the garden of your thoughts? What will you put in their place? With what will you now adorn that luxurious and empty palace which is your heart?”

“What advantage is it to you to know

¹ Koran.

the delicious whirl of the life outside? Circassian Dilfeza, why did you not shut your mind to those who taught you that the world did not consist only of the palaces of the *Aliosmans*, where useless princesses and useless slaves live and die? Why did you consult people who told you you were a lonely woman, whose one crime is to live when the reason for living does not exist?

"You have wept a great deal, Dilfeza. That is why your blue eyes have paled, like rose petals left too long in the sun; and the white in your hair has no lustre: it might be mistaken for those mournful-looking threads of yellow Broussa silk which the slaves weave on their woollen looms.

"But who taught you to weep? It is those books which taught you!"

How many times have I not tarried in the evening to watch through my latticed windows the swift current of the strait, and the boatmen who pass by, carried by the tide, happy and contented! When they

are rowing against the tide, their muscles standing out with the effort, they are just as satisfied.

Then there are the pleasure caiques in which young men spend their afternoons singing and breathing in the sea air. Then the foreign ships which come and go, and the barges bearing their cargoes of wood and fruit, so heavy that they look as if the water would come over on both sides; the fishermen in the evening and the whistles of the sailors; and the ferry boats which carry the passengers from one shore to the other. They sing so joyfully sometimes, and laugh! Each boatman goes home every evening to wife and children; each song is a song of love; every young man who passes has some illusion or some sorrow. Perhaps, after all, this is when I learnt what I know of life.

I have never spoken of this to Aïché. She would be too sad, Leyla would laugh, and the little slaves would want to learn and then be unhappy.

The negro Dilaver might understand perhaps, but he is sadder even than I.

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Keep to yourself, Dilfeza, all your sorrow and all your grief; never let the Emerald Palace know that you have guessed what life is.

CHAPTER XIII

INTO THE NET

STAMBOUL is a wonderful city, Edhem Pasha tells me. Every day he rides through it mounted on an Arab horse, and sometimes he speaks of its beauties to me. The Palace belonging to the Greek Sultans who lived at Stamboul before my masters, which he has often visited, is of marvellous magnificence; and Aga-Sophia, where, as young children, we used to play, was first of all a Greek church, he tells me; but I refuse to believe it, and Aïché and Edhem are amused at my ignorance and stubbornness.

Of the other mosques, the palaces which are situated along the water, the magnificent towers, the European and the

Asiatic rivers flowing into the Bosphorus just here in front of our Palace, where every Friday during the season I see hundreds of caiques, he speaks to me. He is a good, kind man, and my slowness of comprehension does not exasperate him : on the contrary, he tries to interest me, and really he has taught me many things.

But, after all, it is nice to live near these two dear children ! They are fond of me, and that thought ought to make me a little happy. It doesn't require much to content me : a little affection and a little going on, so that I can write about it in the evening here in my room when I am alone ; surely that is not asking too much of life !

.

Alas ! what I dreaded is coming to pass. Aïché is imprudent enough to allow Leyla to be a great deal in the society of her husband. What is to be

the end of the intimacy which is growing up between them? With another woman I should not have been so afraid.

Very few men could resist Leyla's charms ; I don't believe any could, although I really know little about these things. She has such a peculiar fascination with her red hair and dull eyes, and white skin, supple figure, and her unexpected and playful movements. She comes nearly every day at present, and when something prevents her, Aïché is out of sorts all the afternoon.

.

To-day the negro Dilaver came to speak to me in my room. He is an old Abyssinian, as thin as a stick and as black as ebony, and the curious shape of his mouth makes him look as if he were continually grimacing. His thick coarse lips open every now and again, and when he smiles his expression is false and cunning. His little eyes were once bright, but the pupils have dimmed with age,

his long body is bent, his shoulders stoop, and his gait is heavy and weary.

It took him some time before he would tell me the object of his visit.

"You know, dear Hasnadar," he began, "the deep attachment I have for our Sultana."

"Certainly I do, Dilaver Agha."

Here Dilaver paused, took from the pocket of his frock-coat a huge handkerchief, unfolded it carefully, and having blown his nose vigorously, he folded it up again and put it back in its place.

"Don't you think that Leyla Sultana comes a little too often to the Palace?" He quickly raised his head and looked at me; I had grown pale, no doubt, for he added: "Ah! you have been anxious, dear Hasnadar, and you are right. Should Leyla continue to come here often, there will be a misfortune." Then he lowered his voice and said: "The Sultana has introduced her to the Pasha, and she is more beautiful and more fascinating than Princess Aïché. And then

Aïché is his wife and the other is not, and Leyla hates our Sultana and detests her own husband—that's all, dear Hasnadar."

I felt as though I had had a sharp blow in my heart, and it hurt me terribly.

"I know all that, Dilaver."

"If you know it already, you must stop it, or else, Allah! what will happen?"

He made a strange gesture.

"It is difficult, certainly; the Sultana is very fond of her cousin. She doesn't see the game the other is playing."

Coming very near to me, Dilaver added softly and quickly:

"Leyla cannot like her, that is impossible—impossible! Have you forgotten the story of her father? It is Aïché's father who killed him. She will not forgive that; she will take her revenge on our Sultana. Everything is to be feared from this woman, because, after all, you see, she has every right to do it. She has suffered, her father has suffered, her mother gave birth to her in a prison. Leyla will take her revenge, and she will

take her revenge on our dear child. She must. How else can she strike the master?"

"Be silent!" I cried.

But the negro looked straight at me with his blinking eyes.

"We must not be silent, we must do something," he said; "do something."

Then Dilaver rose, took my hand and kissed it, and his bent back, lanky legs, and big hips disappeared through the door, and I was left in silence and alone.

.

This evening I kept Aïché company; Edhem Pasha had friends in the Selamlık, and was not expected to return before midnight. She was resting, stretched on a divan. I asked her permission to stay, and sat down beside her. But I could not imagine how to begin what I intended to say. My one idea was to make her understand my anxiety about her cousin, but the fear of frightening her perhaps uselessly kept me silent, and my poor brain had to

make tremendous efforts to continue the conversation.

What a difficult thing it is to talk in a palace ! Days of silence, the monotony of a useless life, all help to dull one's power of thinking. Of what could I speak ? Of the negro Abdullah, who is ill, of the little slave who broke a china vase, or of old Cadem,¹ who slipped on one of the steps and sprained her foot ? Yes, I spoke of all these things. The Princess pretended to listen to me (but her thoughts were elsewhere), smiling sometimes, nodding her head in approval when I asked her opinion about the slaves' dresses and the colour of their ribbons. Then suddenly she shut the book which was lying open on her lap and, looking at me, said :

“ Dilfeza, why do you speak of all these tiring things ? Tell me something else.”

Before I could reply, she had begun her confession.

“ I thought I was happy till now. Yes, it seemed to me there was no happiness

¹ Negress.

on earth but my own. Now it is not sufficient for me : I don't care for anything around me, my dear old Dilfeza ; I am suffering. What am I to do?"

"What is the matter, my child?" I asked. "Tell me."

"I am sad because this life of an indolent Princess, nursed in the lap of luxury, is not enough for me. I want many other things ; I want to be free, to go away when I like, to see the world and new countries, far, far away—do I even know what I want?"

She was silent ; I seized the opportunity to ask her :

"What does Edhem Pasha say about this, my child?"

"Dilfeza, there are things you do not understand. Edhem Pasha is not like me. We love each other—you know we do ; but there are moments when even that love is not enough for us."

"Were Edhem Pasha taken from you, what would you do, my child?"

Aïché looked at me with terror.

"I should die."

"Then why should you want anything else, my Princess, since you love one another and are together?"

She looked down.

"Till now I thought as you do, but now that happiness does not content me. It is as if a window of my soul had been opened and I could see things which I cannot reach. Oh, the hatefulness of being a captive Princess! And yet, even were that window to be closed again, I never could have the happiness that's gone. Yes, all is over, Dilfeza."

"Princess Aïché," I said passionately, "I love you. How I wish I could bear your trouble for you! But don't you know the real cause of all this unhappiness?"

"No, I do not."

"Isn't Leyla Sultana the cause of a great deal of it?"

She did not appear astonished at my question.

"I have often asked myself whether she had anything to do with my sorrow,

but I do not think so. She herself suffers as I do."

"But your cousin spoke of her suffering first?"

"Yes, I think it was she. I cannot blame her for it. One day I should have discovered the emptiness of this life for myself."

"Perhaps your Highness sees too much of the Sultana."

"I can't do without her now," replied Aïché. "Her intelligence is necessary to me. She sympathizes with my unhappiness, she knows how to comfort me, and understands the uselessness of our life. Even were Leyla to go away, the evil is there: the window has been opened, and I have seen!"

The Princess was weeping, like a child who is hurt. Her hair fell over her face, wet with tears, but she did not put it back. She wept as if she were astonished at having to suffer, amazed at seeing the gulf of sorrow for the first time.

CHAPTER XIV

LIFE IN THE PRISON PALACE

FOR more than two months I have not written a word. The summer has passed in its usual monotonous manner. Autumn has come, the season when ships do not sail so often up the Bosphorus, which washes this Palace where we live, when the little caïques which in the summer have borne so many passengers to joy or sorrow have been laid up for the rest of the year, when the falling leaves and the dying season spreads all around an atmosphere of unhappiness.

.
Since the day when she related to me

the woes of a "useless Princess nursed in the lap of luxury of Palace life," we have never spoken of them again.

Leyla has come to-day as usual; her charm and intelligence still interest Aïché, and still more her husband, Edhem Pasha. Again, to-day, her lovely hands have distributed sweets to the child slaves, and she has shed in profusion her smiles and graces throughout the Palace, where her visits are the one thing which breaks its monotony.

.

To-day I saw Djavidane. From time to time she comes to tell me the torture she is suffering, and which nothing will cure; and when I see the depth and seriousness of her love and the hopelessness of it, I take her in my arms and mingle my tears with hers.

.

The Sultana is not well.

I myself was not aware that she was

feeling ill until this morning. Dilaver told me that Edhem Pasha had sent a messenger, post-haste, for the doctor. Very much worried, I hastened to her room.

It was nearly noon. She was lying in her big gold and purple bed just a little pale.

"I have been weak and nervous for a few days, and Edhem Pasha is uneasy. But it is nothing, Dilfeza," she replied, in answer to my questions. Her husband, clad in an officer's undress uniform, was walking up and down the room, greatly agitated.

"Why doesn't that doctor come?" he said impatiently.

"My dear husband, what is the use of worrying yourself?" said Aïché. "I can assure you there is nothing the matter with me; indeed, I find the doctor's visit quite unnecessary."

"I do not," he replied. "For days I have begged you to see the doctor. You are not yourself, Aïché."

"I have not noticed that her Highness required particular attention," I said.

He threw back his head and added sarcastically :

"What do you know about it, Dilfeza? Old women's remedies are more in your line. The Sultana is not well."

Continuing to walk up and down, he added :

"Besides, others are of my opinion. Aïché's cousin has advised her for over a week to see the doctor."

"That is true," said the Sultana. "Leyla is very anxious about me."

Then there was a silence.

There was a knock at the door—it was Dilaver.

"Dr. Ismail Bey is in the Selamlık," he said.

Edhem turned round quickly.

"All right, I am coming," he said; then turning to me, "We shall be here in a quarter of an hour; please be ready."

He went away quickly.

“Aïché, my beloved child, is there anything the matter?” I asked.

“I don’t know,” she replied sadly. “For weeks Edhem has been like this. I am not ill; I was only tired this morning, but he insisted on my seeing this doctor, and I dared not refuse.”

CHAPTER XV

AÏCHÉ'S ILLNESS

ALREADY the slaves had brought the veils. I covered Aïché's head and hair and chin carefully, only allowing her exquisite eyes to be seen; those eyes which look so large and solemn from under the white yashmak. I veiled myself too, and we waited.

The doctor came in, followed by Edhem Pasha. I rose. He walked into the middle of the room, and then, stopping, made a very deep bow. Aïché acknowledged his bow, and so did I. He remained where he was, awaiting orders.

His long thin body was bent, his livid head seemed to be buried in his shoulders. His big eyes, which gave him the appear-

ance of an owl on a perch, were fixed on the carpet, his forehead was completely hidden, and his two big ears popped up on either side of his fez.

"Please step forward, doctor," said Edhem Pasha.

Then, turning to Aïché, he said, "Here is the doctor. He will have the honour of prescribing for you, if you will allow it."

Aïché smiled, but there was a touch of irony in her smile.

"Certainly," said she. "Kindly be seated."

I placed an armchair near the bed. He advanced slowly, with a humble and gloomy look; then making another bow he sat down.

The Sultana was studying him carefully with her big sad eyes. Between her almost meeting eyebrows a line had furrowed its way, and, in spite of the freshness of her complexion and her youthful appearance, this look of hardness showed her likeness to the Sultan, her father.

The doctor raised his eyes to hers,

bent his head, arched his back a little more, then once again looked at the carpet. When, however, he thought the Princess had sufficiently taken in his personality, he straightened himself up and said in a raucous voice :

“What is the matter with your Highness?”

She replied in a monotonous, listless voice that she did not know.

He felt her pulse, listened to her heart, reflected a moment, then said he would give Edhem a prescription.

“Plenty of air,” he added, “plenty of air, no worry, entertainment, reading, and every care,” and after a profound *selam* he went away.

During the consultation Edhem was looking out of the window, but when the doctor rose to go he stepped forward and, opening the door, made way to let him pass. The doctor would not allow this, and, bowing, he waited for Edhem to go out first ; then his thin form vanished and the door was shut.

I went over to Aïché.

"Well, my Princess," I asked, "how do you like that doctor?"

"Not at all," she said; "he is just like a crow, isn't he, Dilfeza?"

Then she began to laugh like a child.

"But you must take what he orders, all the same, and do what he tells you."

"We shall see."

She slowly began to take off the veil in which her head was bound; her hair, damp with its heat, had stuck to her temples. She looked like a child in this big bed.

At this moment Edhem Pasha came in. He was still more nervous than before the doctor's visit.

"Mind," he said, hurrying to Aïché, "you follow the doctor's orders."

She looked at him.

"Perhaps," she said; then, lifting up her head, she asked, "What is the matter?"

He was pale. "Nothing; only anxiety!"

"Your anxiety for me does not improve your temper," said Aïché in a dry tone.

"That is true," said Edhem Pasha.
"Excuse me, Aiché, I am very nervous to-day."

She became aggressive.

"Of us two, it is you who need the doctor most."

"Perhaps," he said, walking up and down. Then he excused himself on the ground that Aiché no doubt wanted to get dressed, and, without waiting to know her reply, he opened the door between their two rooms and disappeared.

CHAPTER XVI

LOSING HEART

“**I** WILL not see that doctor again,” Aiché said to me when, towards noon, I went to her room. He had paid a second visit to the Sultana, and this time had examined her more carefully. That had annoyed her.

“I won’t see him! I won’t—I won’t!” she repeated obstinately.

She straightened herself up, her eyes bright and dry. Then suddenly she flung herself into the large arm-chair, and, burying her head in her hands, sobbed as though her heart would break.

I know not what to say or do. Everything is disorganized, and we are drifting. What now has become of the basis of our

life, the axis round which all our energy and devotion turned—I mean the affection and mutual trust of these two human beings?

In my strong arms I raised my Princess and held her to my heart. She continued weeping; I did not question her; what was the use? Why draw attention to her woes? I knew why she was suffering. Something between them has snapped; she feels it, and because of her incapacity to draw him back she is suffering. I know it only too well.

For some little while she has kept me aloof, for she is too proud to tell me, almost her mother, of this sorrow which is eating her heart. As a happy bride, she told me of her love and her joy, but now she keeps her sorrow to herself—truly a Sultan's daughter!

.

In the afternoon Leyla came. Aïché did not care to get up, so she lay on the divan and received her cousin in

her bedroom. I was with the Sultana when Leyla entered. Her expression was worried and her eyes tired.

"Well, what did the doctor say?" she asked.

Aiché held out her hand.

"That I was dying," she said, in a mournful voice.

Leyla bit her lips.

"What is the use of these sinister jokes?"

Then, turning to me, "Don't you think Aiché is unreasonable?"

I stared at her a moment.

"I haven't found the Sultana changed," I said. "I do not know what is your Highness's opinion, but it seems to me she does not require this doctor to attend her, seeing his visits upset her instead of doing her good."

Leyla returned my stare.

"Do you think so?" she added.

"Yes, I am certain," I continued, "and I know, too, that Sultana Aïché needs, above everything else, peace and quietude."

I ceased speaking, for my voice was shaky.

Leyla saw my emotion. "What is the matter, Dilfeza?" she asked.

"Dilfeza becomes unbearable whenever there is anything the matter with me; she is terrified for her child," said Aïché, looking at me affectionately.

"But why does Dilfeza not wish you to be properly taken care of?" asked Leyla.

"I did not say that," I objected; "but I have no faith in this doctor. It seems to me the Sultana could quite well dispense with his services and take care of herself. And besides, he is not the only doctor."

"He is my doctor," Leyla explained; "I have great faith in him, otherwise I should not have recommended him."

"Ah! he is your doctor." Hardly had I said it before I regretted my exclamation. Leyla's face expressed decided annoyance, but I continued, wishing Aïché to bear me out:

“ You yourself, Princess, do not care for him, do you ? ”

“ I don't know,” she said hesitatingly. “ I am, perhaps, a little difficult to please. Maybe the doctor is kind and clever ; I really do not know.”

When I noticed the Sultana's obedience to the will of her cousin, I knew my child was lost.

CHAPTER XVII

A LEAF FROM THE HASNADAR'S CHILDHOOD

WHEN Aïché is sad, she sends for me.

“Tell me, Dilfeza,” says she, “all that you used to do in your own country.” Then I gaze at the carpet, for my heart is sore, I cannot trust my tears.

“My Princess,” I answer, “don’t ask me to speak of my childhood.”

But she remains firm, not knowing how cruel it is to make me recall those days. She cannot know, too, the despair and love and dreams that those two words “my country” bring back to me. How could she be expected to understand, this sweet Sultana, brought up in the lap of luxury?

“Tell me all about it, Dilfeza. Please begin.”

And I begin ; but the tears force their way to my eyes, and my hands tremble so that I keep them fastened tightly together. /

Yes, I remember it all, and I tell her about my happy, happy childhood.

I was an only child, and my mother adored me. We had a tiny white house at the entrance of a wood, a little way from the village. My first memories were of the harvests of acorns in the wood. Later I chased the squirrels, and my mother was frightened lest I should fall and hurt myself. My father worked in the village ; he loved us very dearly. He spoke little, but he was good and kind, and my mother loved him too.

Near the wood, I remember, there was a lake that reflected the neighbouring mountains. I remember, also, the cemetery where afterwards my mother was buried. That too was near the lake. Then, as my father was away all day,

and he could not leave me alone, he gave me to relations who were going far away. He kissed me affectionately, and told me to be good and kind, and that was all. I remember nothing about my relations except that they took me away, and sold me to a slave-merchant who had many other little girls to sell; and later I was bought for the Sultan's Palace.

"That is all, my Princess; you see it is not long."

Aïché did not answer. She was in a dream. Her large eyes are sad when she dreams.

Perhaps she was comparing my childhood with her own.

Ah, but my childhood was happy; the little beasts in the wood were my companions. We had a goat, which I called Hadje, who loved me and followed me everywhere I went; and my bed was only a mattress which my mother every evening threw down near her own and folded up in the daytime and put

in the cupboard. She little dreamt that the honey cakes she made me were signs of the years of abundance which were to follow? . . . I can still smell the bread as she took it from the oven and see my father breaking it in three with his large hands.

How could my Princess understand that this village, lake, and wood are still all the world to me, and that this humble household with its wide-open door contained for me more riches than all the palaces of the Osmons?

Yes, I think she understands a little, and the moonlight coming through the latticed windows finds us united but sad—sad and united, the Sultana Aïché and Dilfeza—the Princess and the Circassian slave.

.

Dilaver is getting old—a hundred times a day he repeats the same thing. His great delight is to come and tell me all that is going on, and that annoys me.

He thinks more and more of his own importance; he has under him five Aghas, black-skinned guardians of the Palace, and he has to be very severe with them, for they are young and are a little too fond of sweetmeats, cigarettes, and practical jokes.

"But you like these things yourself, Dilaver Agha?"

Then he looks all round me with a frightened expression.

"Oh, be quiet! were they to hear I should be lost. These young rascals must not even suspect that I like them too."

And when I threaten to tell them he becomes anxious.

"Hasnadar," he says, "you who are still young and gay and merry, why should you want to torment me?"

"Then, Dilaver, don't torment them."

.

Yes, yes, yes, all is now over—Aïché is no longer mistress of her own soul.

She is just a tool in the hands of Leyla and Edhem, who unceasingly humiliate her. And what is worse, she has no idea of what is happening. My poor, fair, beautiful Princess! My adored Sultana!

.

Djavidane is more and more in love with the Pasha; she came this morning to tell me all about it; with lovesick intuition she has grasped the whole situation.

"Why," she said to me, "are Edhem and Aïché not as they used to be? He is nervous, sulky, and silent; she is sad and often has red eyes; and why does Leyla Sultana come so much?"

I pretended not to understand.

"Aïché is very fond of her; and why should our Princess be alone?" I answered.

"Listen, Dilfeza Calfat," said the young woman. "Till this spring Leyla Sultana did not come to the Palace, and

the Princess Aïché was none the worse for that."

Instinctively she hates Leyla. I could see it stamped on her face when she spoke of her; she seemed to have understood Leyla was everything to Edhem, that the arms of the man she loved had been around another than Aïché, but not round her, the poor little slave-girl who could never know the real meaning of love, and that his soul, his love, his life, were dedicated to this red-haired Sultana,—the enemy of my child.

CHAPTER XVIII

“ — ? ”

BUT is it true? Perhaps I am mad. Does Edhem really love Leyla? How can I tell? One day, when the negro Dilaver was speaking to me about it, he wondered whether Aïché had noticed anything, and whether Edhem was the only one to be unaware of the empire that the red-haired Sultana had taken over him? He cannot know of what that tyrannical and wild woman is capable.

Besides, is it altogether his fault? Is it not the vanity of this proud Osman Aïché that is her ruin? She never supposed any other woman could shine beside her.

And yet, seeing them together, who could have a doubt? Any one could see

which of these two women in a struggle for mastery would be successful; Leyla, of course, with her strange and silent beauty, her hard eyes which can look so tender, her determined yet charming mouth, her air of power, her seductive personality.

CHAPTER XIX

MOONLIGHT ON THE BOSPHORUS

HOW beautiful it is this evening! It is like a warm summer's day, and the air is full of the perfume of the roses as it comes through my latticed window.

It is Friday—the day of rest for the people, a day like any other day for me—monotonous and sad. All the afternoon *caïques* have glided along the Bosphorus, coming from the sweet waters which are on the opposite side. There are many women in *yashmaks* in the *caïques*; and young men in fine uniforms; and one of these boats has a small orchestra—violins, *ouds*, and tambourines. Some of the singers have fine voices, and the

refrain of the song comes over the sea :

“Come near to me, thou whom I love,
Who hast such wild, wild hair.”

They sang loudly, and their voices had wonderful echoes. The caique moved slowly, and the oars hardly touched the water.

All the little slaves were at the windows. The singers seemed to realize they were passing before a palace, and that behind those latticed windows there were little listening souls. So they began another song :

“How dost thou appear?
Are thine eyes turquoise?
Is thy throat silver?
Oh, tell me, how dost thou appear?”

Then the caique passed slowly onwards, but for a long time the words seemed to come to us :

“Oh, tell me, how dost thou appear?”

There was a general uneasiness in the Palace, and every woman there seemed to be dreaming. The men in the caïques had awakened sleeping echoes in their souls.

All the slaves stood listening long after the boats had passed ; there was something else then beyond the walls of this Palace. . . . Songs of love and songs of joy !

.

What a lovely evening it is ! Not a breath of wind to disturb the calm, calm sea. The moon has lit up the narrow Bosphorus ; the hills and the trees have cast their reflection on to its bosom, and the park has a spectral appearance with patches of light across its paths between the clumps of trees.

Yes, peaceful indeed is this town of Islam and this Palace which is hushed to sleep.

CHAPTER XX

THE HASNADAR'S ANXIETY

AÏCHÉ is still in bed. The doctor comes daily, and she now submits in silence.

.

To-day when Leyla Sultana was announced I went to meet her, and asked her to be good enough to let me speak to her. We went together to the Mauve Salon. She sat down, and requesting me also to be seated, said :

“What is it, Dilfeza ?”

I remained standing.

“What does your Highness think of your cousin ?” I asked.

“I am very much worried about her,” she answered.

"I am still more worried, Leyla Sultana ; indeed, so worried that I have determined to ask you whether you really have faith in your doctor."

"Absolute faith," said she. "He is my husband's doctor, and very clever, I can assure you, Dilfeza."

"That is good. I am glad ; but do you think that his treatment will cure her in her present state of weakness?"

"I am certain of it. Besides, Aïché is only suffering from nerves, and it is not serious."

"No, it is not serious," I answered.

I had prepared a long speech, and that was all I was able to say. Seeing I was silent, she added :

"I am going to my cousin."

All kinds of thoughts had taken possession of me. I felt I must throw myself in front of her, or find some other way of preventing her from going to her cousin. It seemed to me I must tell her I held her responsible for the Prin-

cess's illness and all the sorrow that was coming to the Emerald Palace.

She went out of the room, and I followed. In the hall she quickly took off her yashmak, and then hurried up the staircase. Always following her, I arrived when she was at Aïché's door. When she noticed that I was near her she stopped, and her eyes had a hard expression. I returned her gaze ; then, drawing herself up, her lips smiled and her eyes grew softer.

"Good gracious, how quickly you can walk, Dilfeza!" she said ironically.

"Not so quickly as your Highness," I answered calmly.

"Yes, nearly as quickly."

With renewed energy, she opened the door, and, stopping on the threshold, asked in a clear, soft voice :

"May I come in, dear cousin?"

"Yes, come in, dear," was the reply.

Aïché was in her bed, almost buried in cushions. They embraced each other very affectionately.

"Well, well, dear one, and have those wretched nerves given you any peace?" asked Leyla.

"Yes," answered Aiché; "I slept well; and, besides, I am supposed to be worse than I really am."

"That's always the way," said Leyla, "but it is better to take all precautions. One gets well all the quicker."

Aiché indeed did not look ill; her cheeks were rosy, her eyes were bright, and there was no sign of fatigue on her face.

"I think your Highness ought to rise," said I.

Leyla frowned.

"You are always in too great a hurry, Dilfeza," she said. "You ought to know the Princess must not get up to-day."

With calm dignity I repeated, "Yes, she ought to get up. Stopping in bed weakens and fatigues her, and you know that, Leyla Sultana."

She grew pale.

"Really, I fail to understand you, Dilfeza," she said.

Aïché intervened.

"Please excuse her, Leyla. She can be very disagreeable when anything is the matter with me."

"I understand that," replied Leyla. "But why should she vent her spite on me?"

"Your Highness must excuse me," I quietly said. "I am always ill-tempered when I am thwarted, and my age gives me the privilege of having a bad temper."

They both laughed.

"I shall not get up," said Aïché; and Leyla walked up the satin-carpeted steps of the bed and sat beside her cousin.

I went away and left them alone, with an aching head and heart.

How I loathe Leyla Sultana! Yes, indeed. What would I not give to be able to take her fine, aristocratic head in my big strong hands and crush the very life out of it! All my Circassian blood,

the blood of a race of warriors, wild, revengeful, and intrepid, is battling in me; that wild blood, which in spite of forty years of seclusion seems to be still boiling within me. Why did I not take those thin wrists in mine and tell her to her face how I hate and loathe her; then trample her to death, this treacherous woman!

She has taken Aïché from me, and is killing her. She excites her, then drives her to despair, and, worst crime of all, she has taken Edhem from her.

Yes, there is no doubt about it. Edhem is madly in love. His every gesture betrays it: his eyes when he is speaking to her, his anxiety when she is not there, and, last but not least, his cold indifference to Aïché.

.

I am indeed wretched. It seems to me that it is I who am being betrayed and tortured, that it is my husband who

is being taken from me ; and I am suffering more than I can tell.

All these years I have lived for Aïché ; her joys have been my joys, and I believe that when she loved Edhem I loved him too. I cannot bear this agony ; but what am I to do ? I have no one in whom I can confide. Djavidane, perhaps ? No, that would not be right. She would suffer more than I, because she loves him, and that love, in spite of her humility and in spite of her enforced silence, is the one ray of sunshine she has in her life. There is Dilaver, the old negro ; no, he would not understand. For him everything is out of focus—love and hatred alike. . . .

I have been walking up and down in my room for an hour. It is dark, there are clouds in the sky which announce a coming storm, my head is bursting, I feel as if my senses were leaving me. These walls and lattices and windows and doors ! All closed—closed for ever.

Yet, one day for me these doors must open. Four men, simply dressed, will be seen carrying on their heads a long, narrow white wooden coffin. Then they will walk towards a hill I know so well ; there will be cypress-trees near one another and white turban-topped tombs. There they will leave me, and there I will sleep my last sleep, in a wide open space under the calm, tranquil sky, without guardian or escort.

Allah ! if only to-morrow were that day !

CHAPTER XXI

A SALE OF SLAVES AT THE EMERALD PALACE

THE Palace seems awake again. This morning a dozen little slaves came to my room ; they wanted to see the Sultana.

“For weeks we haven’t seen her ; what is the matter ?” they asked.

“Our Princess is ill,” I told them.

“Too ill to receive us ?” they asked. They seemed so bent on seeing her that I went to ask the Sultana’s permission to let them see her.

They came down two by two to her room, kissed her hand, and went away again. The eldest of them was fifteen years old, and the youngest ten, all bought

when they were quite young, and they had grown up at the Palace. Poor little martyrs, with their pure naïve souls, they knew not the mourning for their youth they would wear their life long.

Once back again in my room I found Dilaver waiting. His poor old body became more and more bent, and he rose with difficulty to greet me.

“How is the Sultana?” he asked.

I answered that she was very tired and lying on her bed.

He laid his black wrinkled head on his hands.

“It’s terrible!” he exclaimed, after much thought. Then, casting his eyes on the carpet, “It’s terrible—terrible—yes, terrible!” he added.

The old man and I really do not require to speak. He knows I can guess what he wants to say. He remained calm and silent for some time. Then, without saying a word, he rose, kissed my hand, and his bent back again disappeared.

The slave who was personally attached

to Aïché came to my room this morning to say that when she went into her mistress's room the Sultana was deathly white and looked as if she had fainted. Then she began to weep with all her devoted little heart, assuring me that it was the drugs prescribed by the doctor which were doing her more harm than good, and that it was since she had had these drugs that she could not get out of bed.

.

The Bosphorus is very beautiful this evening, so light and clear. How comfortably near all the yalis on the opposite bank appear to us! Why is this, I wonder? Does the autumn understand our loneliness? Does it wish to rock us in the cradle of illusion? Every morning anxiously I look out of the latticed windows, and I see things so near.

But to-day it is especially fine. Dilfeza—poor old Dilfeza!—is it necessary for you to feel so keenly the beauty of the scenery, to be so sensitive to the colour of the

sky and the sea, to find pleasure in the flowers that the little girls gather in handfuls in the gardens, and against whose petals you may cool your burning cheeks and hands?

Without this adoration for Nature what should I do? I say to myself; but it seems to me, in spite of all those lives about which I can only guess, in spite of all the sorrow which passions and dreams bring in their train, few beings can detach themselves quite from the beauty which I see to-day.

Is it possible that all those hundred eyes behind the lattices of the Bosphorus are, as I am, revelling in this autumn day?

.

The Princess is getting worse. Edhem will not leave her bedside. The doctor comes every day; Leyla is nearly the whole day here. I have no power to change anything. I am the person who is most distrusted and feared. I am now openly hostile to the red-haired Sultana

and Edhem Pasha. What is going to happen? What is to become of us?

To-day a messenger came from the Imperial Palace to ask how Aïche was. Edhem answered :

“ She is better ; it is just a little anæmia and nervousness.”

No, it is more. Aïché is dying.

.

I looked at myself this morning in the glass. My hair is almost white, and my eyes, which were once as blue as corn-flowers, are faded and their pupils dead. My long thin face is pale, my hands are thin, there is no youth in my smile. Yet my figure is still young and supple, although my poor face has withered. Then, when I think of the years that have passed, I weep, for my heart is very full and heavy.

To-day there was a sale of slaves at the Emerald Palace. What a day ! And in the evening, when my poor little band of slaves had gone to sleep, I

sobbed for hours in the solitude of my room. I didn't want to keep these slaves. I told the merchant woman that they were sickly and not beautiful, and that the Sultana had no room for more. But she would not take "no" for an answer, and the slaves cried bitterly when they were not bought, no doubt because they thought she would beat them for not being sufficiently beautiful—so I kept them.

Yet it was for their sakes I did not wish to keep them. Poor little souls! had they only been sold to one of the rich families in the town they would not live so secluded, would have been happier, and sooner free. But they don't know that, these poor children, and I remember my own joy when I first heard that I was to be sold to the Sultan. I should have been ashamed had I been refused. How well I remember it all—forty years ago—we were just two girls—two pretty little fair girls. The slave merchant woman

had combed our hair, washed us, and dressed us with particular care, and we were happy when the Saraylie¹ welcomed us with approval, for we understood that we had given satisfaction. The Imperial Harem flattered our vanity.

How delighted I was when the second Cadine, the mother of my Princess, chose and kept me always near her. Who could have been happier than I? For several days, several weeks, I remember how pleased the Sultanas were with my prompt attention to my duties. I was up and dressed as soon as dawn broke, my hair neatly done, my new dresses put on with care; I ran about here, there, and everywhere. I was full of life and energy. But the joy did not last long. Once accustomed to the Palace, to the park, to my life, once aware that I would never go out again, I hated my slavery, and the memory of

¹ Person who inspects the slaves—examines their teeth, hair, etc., before buying them.

the happy days of my childhood, the evening meals that my poor mother served for us, came back to me with double force. My companions, young and old, had resigned themselves to their seclusion. Those of my own age ran about in the big park; the closed windows and doors did not trouble them. And yet the same blood ran in our veins. Circassian like me, they did not share my agony. Many of them hoped to become favourites of the Sultan, our master, and to become Imperial wives, and when I told them my dread of such a fate they laughed.

And, indeed, how have I been able to escape that humiliation? Here, in the confidential pages of my life, I may answer that question. An instinct warned me that, young and beautiful as I was, I might become an Imperial favourite; so, to protect myself, I kept nearer and nearer to the second Cadine. She understood. Never did I see the Sultan, our master, until the birth

of Aïché, and when I asked the poor Cadine to be allowed to bring up the child, she accepted only too gladly.

She was already attacked with the illness which was to carry her off, yet with what happy eyes she watched my virgin arms rocking her child ; with what a grateful heart she entrusted to me the flesh of her flesh !

Have I proved worthy of the trust ? I ask myself. Yes, indeed I have.

.

Our little slave, Ikbal, is ill. Our doctor came this evening ; I veiled Ikbal. I too was veiled ; and, accompanied by Dilaver, I asked him what he thought of the child.

“It is her age,” he said, “a desire for a freer life. She is pining for the freedom of her childhood. She is not ill, Hasnadar, but she is not made to live here.

"With you, Hasnadar," he said, "I need have no fear; to any other Palace lady I would not dare to say that, you understand. They would accuse me of wishing to upset the tranquillity of the Imperial Harem. You know how delicate is the situation."

"What must be done for Ikbal?" I asked.

"I really don't know how to advise you. Were she not so young, I would say, 'Ask her Highness to liberate her, and marry her to one of the guards.' But she is so young! Be careful of her brain, and mind the others do not tease her too much."

That is what I am afraid of. Nervous as she has become, she is a continual source of anxiety to me. Poor little Ikbal! are you also one of the poor unfortunate creatures not made for seclusion?

.

The slave Irfane is dying. She is

sixteen years old. For a fortnight she has been suffering, and the doctor, who comes every day, does not know what is the matter with her. I don't know what to do; I do my best to nurse her, but I believe it is of little use.

This morning she looked so much like a corpse that her little friends were afraid when they left the room. And yet the poor child is quite conscious. When I went and sat by her bed she opened her eyes and spoke to me; this morning she said :

“I am going to die, am I not? I shall be so happy.”

Then with a smile she added, “I am so weary here.”

I took her little hands in mine; then she shut her eyes and rested. Her hands are burning; her face, after a few days, has the appearance of long and great suffering.

Yes, she is dying! And now I ask myself, what was the use of her life

here? She came to the Palace five years ago, after Aïché's wedding. Scarcely eleven years old, she did not remember anything about her early life, for as a young child she had been stolen by a slave merchant and brought up in a dark house in Stamboul, without air or sun. There, perhaps, she had caught the disease which was killing her. And the more I look at her, the more I ask the wherefore of it all. Here no one will notice her death; there are over a hundred slaves of her age, and her place will be quickly filled. Besides, Irfane was never popular with her little friends. When they formed themselves into little groups to play or embroider together, she would never join them. No one liked her, and she liked no one.

.

Irfane died last night; no one was near her. The slaves were having their meal, and she asked to be alone. When they

came back to her room she was sleeping. They called me, but at first I did not grasp that she had gone. She was lying still, with folded hands and her eyelids closed, and her long hair fell over her shoulders, and she smiled. She did not feel that death was coming. "The Angel" came when he was least expected, so as not to terrify this child who had unceasingly called for him.

.

This morning they took her away. The little coffin was long and narrow, but so fragile that the bearers looked as though they were afraid of breaking it. All the Palace negroes followed it; the Imam was at their head.

It was in the cemetery of Hissar that they were to lay her to rest, on a hillock near the sea, and in the shadow of a hundred cypress-trees. The slaves spoke more softly, made less noise whilst running in the corridors during that morning,

and that was all. One would never have thought that Irfane had ever lived in the Emerald Palace, so little was she missed.

.

The little slaves, Irfane's companions, are again laughing merrily, untroubled by the recent presence of death. They are young—they know nothing. They do not know what is, and they do not know what will be, and perhaps in their souls they long for something, they know not what. How many of these little girls have I not seen who, suspicious first of all, have become soured and almost wicked!

Others have become good and kind. The seclusion to which they were forced, instead of making them revolt, gave them a feeling of calm security—with no responsibility whatever, they were gay and thoughtless, though capable of great devotion. They found pleasure in the thought that they were useful, and did

what they had to do well. Pious they were too, having only hope in the beyond. They felt themselves passengers in this life, and their short journey here was only to prepare them for their future happiness.

CHAPTER XXII

THE HASNADAR SPEAKS OUT

TO-DAY again a messenger came from Yildiz to ask for news of the Sultana. I went once again to see Edhem. He was at home.

“Will your Excellency allow me to have the Palace doctor called by the officer who has just arrived?”

He raised his head.

“It is not necessary,” he said; “Aïché is better.”

“No, she is not better, she is getting worse and worse. She is dying, and you will be responsible, Edhem Pasha.”

He assumed an expression of indifference.

“I do not understand,” he answered; “I have always done my best. Aïché is being treated by a first-class doctor.”

"But I want some one else," I said energetically.

Without answering, he looked at me. There was irony and astonishment in his look. Then after a pause: "I must ask you to calm yourself, Dilfeza," he added.

"His Majesty shall know how his daughter is being treated," I went on.

"I forbid you to go to him," said Edhem, coming very near me.

"No one has any right to give me orders," I answered. "I brought up Aïché; it was I who gave her to you. Since you will do nothing for her, I shall take her back to the Sultan, who entrusted her to me."

He began to laugh, changing his tactics.

"Why," said he, "do you take everything so tragically, Dilfeza? It is not right. You know that were Aïché really ill I would fetch all the doctors in the town."

"I hope so—I always thought so,"

I said, hiding my anger, as he had done.

He was not taken in by my attitude nor was I by his, and I noticed the hard look in his eyes as he turned towards me.

.

Everything is the same. How sad indeed is life here! Leyla comes as usual, but her smiles find no response in my heart. The Sultana gets up sometimes, lunches in the big dining-room hung with silk, and I keep her company. But the words I use express nothing. I feel that she is anxious about herself, and I can find no means of distracting her thoughts. Her hands seem too weak to raise to her mouth the heavy Imperial silver.

Irfane's death has affected her very much. She asks me what killed her, and when I say that the doctor thought it was nervous prostration, she looks at me in a very strange way.

To-day she was wearing a white

princess dress, which showed her figure to advantage. Her fair hair was dressed very high, and some of her curls fell on to her forehead. Her eyes were hollow and appeared larger than ever. Her white face is expressionless, livid.

To go up to her *salon*, I offered her my arm. I hardly felt her leaning on me, her poor body was so frail and thin.

The remainder of the day she was stretched on her couch, an open book in her hands. But she was not reading.

.

To-day Leyla went straight into Edhem Pasha's study, in the Selamlık, and boldly came through the door of communication. She did not, of course, tell Aïché that she had already seen her husband, and when Edhem came to join them she greeted him as though it were their first meeting that day.

Nobody for a moment doubts what is going on in the Palace; Aïché only is blind, or wishes to be.

Last night I was awakened by cries, and a bright light coming from outside. I rose, ran to the window, and saw, a short distance from the Palace, a yali burning. A big, solid wall separated us from the flames. The cries of the inhabitants, half suffocated perhaps, were terrifying indeed. I dressed quickly and went to find the night watchman; he, also, was watching the flames.

“Is there any danger for the Palace, Moukbil Agha?” I asked.

“None,” he answered; “the wind is blowing the flames towards the sea.”

Yet great sparks blew on to the Palace; big pieces of wood, half burnt, rained in the park. The night was calm, a faint wind fanned the fire. All the neighbouring palaces were awakened.

The fire was an interesting spectacle for the slaves. The whole roof and the top story had finished burning, and a terrible cracking announced the fall. The yali, which was made of wood, burnt up like a match. Then when suddenly the flames

seemed to die down, there was a dreadful noise ; the floor that had burnt fell on the other, and on all sides there were again enormous flames. Tongues of fire sprang up, licking the sky, then fell again more calm, more uniform, and less beautiful.

Until dawn the fire lasted. An odour of burnt wood was in the air. The light of the moon eclipsed the flames, and soon there was little left but black smoke and ashes.

The whole night we watched this fire, so this morning I am tired. My head is heavy and my heart sore. I would like to sleep.

CHAPTER XXIII

AÏCHÉ'S SISTER MARRIES

THEY have just sent from the Yildiz Palace to tell us that Princess Aïché's young sister, Salite Sultana, is to be married to one of her father's aides-de-camp. The news at first has no effect on Aïché; nothing now seems to shake her from her torpor. They are telling her all the details of the coming wedding, and trying to interest her in spite of herself. I talked of the fêtes and dancing and laughter and music and songs.

After a few minutes, however, she did begin to question me.

"When was she engaged?"

"Yesterday, my child."

"She has never seen her fiancé, of course?"

"Of course not. How could that be? No other Princess was as fortunate as you."

"That's true," she answered. "I loved Edhem when I married him. And when is she to be married?"

"In two months, at the palace your Imperial father has had built for her."

"We shall not be neighbours. What a pity! Salite is so good and kind."

Then she remembered a thousand and one things about her young sister—details about her childhood, their games in the Yildiz Park, the pranks they had played, and how together they had wept and laughed.

She told me all this as if I did not know her life from day to day and from hour to hour. I listened, however, and as she spoke a tiny little rose colour mantled her cheeks, and she found again her expression of months ago. I was happy.

Now she was interested. She asked me when they were to order the trousseau, and about the dresses. She remembered

how anxious she had been about her own. I said nothing, but I felt as though a breath of cool fresh air were beating against my aching head. I was so happy to see her her old self again and to see her taking so serious an interest even in these trivial things. She even clapped her hands enthusiastically.

“You must ask Sophia to begin my dress at once. I will have a pink one; no, I will have a blue one; or perhaps a white one would suit me better.”

Then she spent an hour hunting amongst the French fashion-plates which we receive every week. She chose one, made me give my opinion about it, and laughed heartily.

We were seated there with the fashion papers on our knees laughing and talking, when Leyla was announced. She halted an instant and stared at us.

I was watching Aïché. Not a muscle moved, but every drop of blood left her face and slowly she let the papers fall.

"Good morning, Leyla," she said at last, with a forced smile.

The other drew near.

"Well, what's the matter?" she asked.

"Salite is to be married in two or three months, and I am looking for a dress for both of us."

Leyla smiled in her own peculiar way.

"What's the use of preparing so far ahead?" she asked. "Is it ever wise to make plans?"

I was standing beside Aïché, and, seeing her anxiety, I asked :

"Why do you not wish Aïché to make her plans, Leyla Sultana? Have you any reason for her not doing so? It is true that many hopes are never realized, but this is surely the exception?"

Slowly she raised her eyes and looked at me.

"Why are you always so aggressive, Dilfeza?"

"I am not; but I would like to remark that your Highness has not answered my question."

She bit her lip with rage.

"What can I answer?" she said. "We all have our opinions, and I have simply stated mine."

"And I have added mine."

Aïché's silence gave me courage, but suddenly I saw a deep line come in Leyla's forehead, and her eyes became harder. So, for fear of a storm which would break over the head of my Princess, I picked up the French papers and went silently away.

.

And now I seem to spend most of my time alone. What good can I do when the Sultanas are together? What should I say? I write a good deal, and I read, and I take a greater interest in the little slaves. Djavidane comes to see me very often; she is always sad. She is expecting a catastrophe too. We understand one another's thoughts.

.

I never see Leyla now when she comes to see my child. What is the use of upsetting Aïché with our continual quarrels? I avoid Edhem, too. Djavidane tells me he is nervous, and always in a bad humour. What a change! What a change!

How I long for the departed days of their unbounded love—the happy meetings in the park of Yildiz—their marriage—then the long weeks and months of happiness and love and our evening chats, all three together, and the lessons they both used to give me. All this is gone, alas! never to return. Even if Leyla were to leave us, it seems to me their love would never be what it was. Yes or no, the evil is done; my child has lost her interest in life. Who would have thought when I gave my Aïché to Edhem that this could have been the sequel to the story? It seemed as if I were getting some return for all my sorrow when I witnessed their happiness. Dilfeza had never been loved,

but she has learnt what love means in this prison Palace—the love of Aïché and Djavidane and Leyla and Edhem, and she will soon come to the betrayal and the mourning.

I feel it is coming—nothing now can prevent it.

PART III

THE PALACE OF YILDIZ

CHAPTER I

BACK TO THE PALACE OF YILDIZ

I KNEW it must happen. Now, alas! only a handful of cinders remain of this great edifice of happiness.

The fire I saw one day from my window comes back to my mind. One day it was a beautiful white building, sparkling in the sun, the next a few burnt logs.

And now for two months we have been here at the Yildiz Palace in Aïché's old apartments, and I have scarcely had time to ask what determined the crisis.

It seems to me, as I look out of these windows on to the beautiful lawns and regular clipped bushes, that I never left it to follow a happy Sultana. Only when I see her walking along the corridors, so

pale that she looks as though she would fall each step she takes, I remember the terrible tragedy which has dimmed her eye and why she rarely smiles now.

We never speak of those four years spent away from Yildiz. Those four years are dead. Did they ever exist? Did Aïché ever leave Yildiz a young, happy, laughing bride? Did I ever follow her? Was there ever an Emerald Palace? a negro called Dilaver? a slave Irfane? a love-sick Djavidane? Did Aïché ever love? Was there ever a Leyla? Yes, above all, was there ever a Leyla? How futile my own sufferings seem to me now—ennui, regrets, and the sadness of solitude, nothing more. My child has had more sorrow than I, but she would not let it conquer her. When she was wounded, she became calm, cold, even cruel, but unforgiving and strong, indeed the Emperor's daughter.

Before that critical moment, I had never seen in her eyes the expression of a ruler. Where did the little child

who had wept on my shoulder find such force, such courage, such serenity in her misfortune? I cannot tell.

It came, no doubt, from her ancestors, from those strong, honest men of the Mongol race whose daughter she is, and I, the slave, bowed before her greatness, scarcely recognizing her. For hours she seemed so far away from me—she might even have been a foreigner, and all the looks and gestures of her ancestors seemed suddenly to find expression in her.

.

But how did it all happen? We were still at the Emerald Palace. The months had followed their course. Aïché was being treated for that continued weakness which daily grew worse. The doctor came regularly, Leyla was always with her, and Djavidane still loved Edhem Pasha.

Leyla came to the Palace every morning. Her train swept along the

corridors like a serpent. Leyla now hardly ever wanted to be escorted up the stairs—she ran up. Then, taking a book, she installed herself near Aïché, and read to her in a deep voice. She was the only person who could amuse Aïché and make her smile, and when Edhem came to join them the harmony between them seemed complete.

Leyla, with her fiery hair and the grace of her figure, was more and more fascinating. She seemed to be protecting Aïché's weakness and carefully watching over her, and trying to cheer her with her mirthless laugh.

Things might have gone on in this way for a long time, had not Djavidane suddenly entered my room one day. It was in the morning ; her face was haggard and as pale as a corpse. In her thin hand she held a paper.

"See," she said, "what I have found in Edhem Pasha's dressing-room. I thought it just a piece of paper, so I crumpled it up and was about to throw it away ; then, I

don't know what made me unfold it again, but I did, and I read it."

That was all she said; then she sat down breathless.

I took the paper from her; it was very crumpled, but I had little difficulty in recognizing Leyla's writing. Although it was disguised, there was still in it her striking personality.

The letter was not signed; a vague sentence terminated it.

I read it, and understood its terrible meaning: "Don't lose heart: everything is going on well; we must now act."

Djavidane rose. "This letter is from Leyla Sultana?"

We looked at one another for some time in silence.

"Yes," I replied after a while.

Then again I remained silent, but feeling I could trust this child, I said, "Yes, it is from Leyla Sultana: what is to be done?"

Then she read it again, and a fit of

anger seized her and she laughed mockingly. "Ah!" she cried, "she writes 'thou'; Leyla must be very intimate with my master."

I did not notice it.

"It is true," I answered, horror-struck.

"Leyla Sultana! yes, I knew it only too well; the ruin of our household," she said; then, after a pause, "The other evening the Pasha came from the Selamlik: 'I have to change my uniform, help me quickly.' I got his other clothes, but when I took off the tunic it was scented—scented with Leyla's own special perfume."

I know not why I smiled, for there was something pathetically sad in this lovesick discovery.

Poor Djavidane! What a tragedy was her life, and what a tragedy she was to make yet another to avenge her jealousy. Why do these walls which imprison us not preserve us from pain and sorrow?—why do they not warn us of the danger of placing our affections where we have no right to love?

CHAPTER II

DJAVIDANE FINDS HER WEAPON

I CANNOT write as I used. How I miss those rosy sunsets when I used to sit in my little room at the Emerald Palace, writing of all kinds of trivialities!

Now it is with my heart's blood that I must write.

On the day that Djavidane first showed me that letter I think I realized to the full the tyranny of our life here. I was a woman, therefore quite as much a slave as the merry little creatures who played around me. Yet I had no friend, no counsellor but poor old Dilaver, a sadder individual even than I.

It was to Dilaver, however, that I showed the letter.

"Dilfeza," he said, "the doctor is poisoning Aïché!"

I can still hear the calm, quiet voice with which he told me this news, but I did not seem to understand; I was as calm as he.

"What are you saying, Dilaver?"

"I was saying, my dear old friend, that the doctor is poisoning Aïché."

"And what about Edhem?"

"Edhem," replied Dilaver, "is afraid; that is why Leyla encourages him."

It was true.

To Djavidane then, indirectly, I owe the awful day that I spent; I walked up and down my room like a caged beast, wild with uneasiness, frightened by Dilaver's revelations, not daring even to go to my child.

The lovesick slave was determined on revenge. There was more to come.

The next morning she brought a casket full of letters which she had read before me.

"See," she cried joyfully, "they are

mine!" and she danced like a *Tcherki* before her trophy.

"Oh, Leyla, Leyla!" she cried, "I have you now; you are mine, you are Djavidane's! Now I shall cease to see your impertinent smiles, for I have enough to send you to the tortures of criminal Sultanas and the fury of the mob."

Then she laughed like a demon.

"Peace, peace," I cried, "in the name of Allah, peace!"

But she hastily closed the door.

"Come and see more, Hasnadar," she cried; "come and see!"

She showed me Leyla's letters, some signed with the audacity of a queen, some with the writing disguised. I read them, whilst Djavidane, seated on the ground, was playing joyfully with the balls of her gilded waistbelt.

Then it was that I first felt how near love is to hatred—the power, the evil power of a woman's hair, a perfume, and a kiss.

Thus it was I learnt that winter morn-

ing, when still a little snow covered the roofs of the pigeon-houses in the park, when the birds huddled themselves together in their nests to keep out the cold—yes, it was that morning, I think, I learnt to understand life.

For a long time I read the letters, one after the other.

Djavidane did not move ; but when I had finished she said :

“Why don't you ask me, Hasnadar, how I got those letters?”

“I should like to know,” I said.

“I went to the Selamlik to fetch them myself.”

“Yourself?”

“Yes ; there are many things of which you are not aware. The little negro, Moukbil, brought me a message that one of the Albanian guards wanted to marry me when I was liberated. I was mad with joy, Hasnadar, and demanded that he should leave the door of the Selamlik open. He did as I requested. So I waited till Edhem Pasha had gone to

sleep in the Harem, then I went to the door of the Selamlik; the door, was shut, but the key was there. 'Open,' I called; 'open the door, I must speak to you.'

"The Albanian opened the door, and I went in as I was—without my veil.

"'What do you want to tell me?' he asked, and his voice trembled and his hand shook.

"At first I did not answer; it gave more weight to the words that were coming to appear agitated. Then, Hasnadar, I, Djavidane, I answered, yes, I would be his, and very soon. I said I could give him my jewels, my dowry, and myself; that the Sultana had given her consent, but on one condition, that I could fetch her something from his Highness's desk. Hasnadar, dear, do you know nothing of life?

"Haydar, the chief Albanian, is strict, brutal even, in his fidelity to his master, as you have always heard, yet he never denied me for an instant the joy of finding

and taking away those letters. He never, of course, dreamt what they were, nor that it was not an order from Aïché; he never asked a question or suggested any difficulty, because he loves Djavidane. . . .

“Here are the letters, Hasnadar; they are more precious than my life.”

I did not interrupt the child; I wanted to know all those things which a little while ago seemed so far away and now are so near. But I did not seem to grasp these facts. It was quite possible that the chief Albanian loved Djavidane and had betrayed his master for her, and that she had promised him her life in exchange for her revenge. How nearly satisfied was her ambition!

And all this was taking place behind the silence and calm of these high walls and closed windows, and in our lives supposed to be so far away from suffering.

After that I cannot very well remember the details of all that happened. I took out some of the letters, locked the rest

up in my room with Djavidane, and went to speak to Edhem.

I believe before I went I took away all the drugs from Aïché's room—at least, that was my intention.

I cannot remember what I said to Edhem nor which bottle I had taken as witness of his crime. All I remember is seeing my own death sentence in his eyes—the rest is a blank in my memory.

CHAPTER III

STRANGE DELIVERERS

HAD I been long in my room before I knew it I cannot tell, all I remember is that Edhem had said to me :

“If you do not wish to kill Aïché, stay in your room until further orders ; I don't want to use violence towards you—you are almost Aïché's mother.”

So there was nothing for it but to remain where I was, and I dared not ask for Dilaver or Djavidane, lest they should be accused and punished with me. Strange things were going on in the Palace. What could I do? Our lives are in the hands of Allah: there is nothing to do but wait.

From the little slave who brought me

food I heard that Leyla came every day to get news of me for her cousin.

Well do I remember her spiteful and cunning smile when one day she came to see me.

“Are you still ill, Hasnadar?—the Sultana is much worried.”

I did not answer. How could I have remained in that state of semi-consciousness? Why did I not with powerful hands tear down her red hair, crush her head, and choke the breath out of that fine white throat which was always uncovered?

But neither my hands nor my body nor my mind obeyed—was it I who had been drinking the poison intended for my child?

After I had accused the Pasha of the crime, Leyla and Edhem must have taken everything from my room, for I could find neither the letters nor the drugs.

.

On the eighth day it snowed again a little. Big flakes fell slowly, touched the branches, then melted into large drops of rain. Each morning I saw a slave sent by the Bach-Calfat to take seed to the birds; but she soon came back again, disliking the walk in the cold, damp paths. The sea from afar was as grey as the pigeons' wings, and whole processions of clouds passed over our heads.

I forgot that I was living, and that near to me a tragedy was being acted. I tried to do something—I couldn't think what it was. I tried to pray to Allah as I had taught the little slaves to pray, but He had forgotten the Emerald Palace and Dilfeza's soul.

The eighth evening came—the lamps were lighted in the garden and in the big halls; the slave who was waiting on me brought the torches; the Palace was as calm as if it had taken a long, long sleep. I was not even suffering.

Once, when I was resting as usual, I suddenly heard a strange noise: sobs,

insults perhaps, and voices calling the name of the Princess. Then the voices drew nearer, and there followed a violent knocking at my door. When it was opened I saw a band of slaves of all ages around me.

“Rise, Hasnadar,” they cried; “rise, we will save you first; then we must save the Princess. Were we not to be trusted to know of her sorrow and this crime? Why did you not tell us? Is Edhem our chief, or Aïché? Did we not come to the Emerald Palace to serve her? What will our Sultan, whom Allah protects, say to all this? He will blame you for not telling us. And to think that we laughed and sang while she is dying, and that Leyla was giving her poison! How could Allah allow such a crime?”

CHAPTER IV

DJAVIDANE'S REVENGE

I SAT up and looked at this band of slaves; the old ones and the young ones and the small children—how their faces had changed; what fire was in their eyes! There were some amongst them whose names I had even forgotten: I had not seen them for many weeks; they were not amongst those told off for “intimate service,” so they hardly ever saw me. However, I saw in all their faces energy and violence. They did not want their Princess to die, although some of them had never even seen her.

I suppose it was I who taught them that silent adoration for their Princess. It was I who awakened in them a feeling of duty and sacrifice, and my work had not

been in vain, since the whole Emerald Palace was there to protect her. But as I still remained silent they went on :

“ We are all here ; we have the proofs of the traitor's guilt. Those who could read have read the letters ; we have tasted the bitter draughts in the bottles, and now we are going to take *our* revenge. Princess Aïché will see us march in in a band, and we shall seize Leyla, Sultan's daughter though she be ; then the negroes will harness the horses ; we will bind her hand and foot and take her to Yildiz, and the Sultan shall know that we have saved his daughter.”

Their pink and blue and green dresses, so simply made, their headdresses of flowers and ribbons and muslin, their feet badly shod in their embroidered babouches, were in singular contrast with the violence of their language.

I was afraid of violence. I remembered hearing in my childhood of the danger of these slave risings ; when these wild creatures, kept in subjection for so long,

suddenly gave full play to their pent-up feelings, there was no staying their hand. That a crime would be the result of their violence I was sure. Would they kill Leyla? I asked myself. I did not try to calm them. I knew that nothing would pacify this army at the Emerald Palace, so I simply said :

“I am coming.”

They had arranged themselves like a squadron of soldiers, and were turning round to march, when a shrill voice cried :

“All the doors are closed, the keys are here, and the park is guarded by the negroes ; Leyla cannot escape.”

Djavidane was giving the orders: standing on a chair, she continued in a loud voice :

“Moukбил and Javer are ready to start. The Albanians do not know what is the matter ; they might help the Pasha to escape, and that would never do.”

I staggered, but I understood at last. The letters and bottles which had disappeared had been taken by Djavidane.

She had done, no doubt, what I had not had the common sense to suppose might happen. She it was who had told the slaves all about the crime, allowed them to read the letters, and this gathering them together was her work.

"Softly," she ordered; "please walk softly—Edhem Pasha is in his room; Leyla Sultana is with Princess Aïché. Some of you guard the corridors. Leyla may try to escape. Don't let her go, I beg of you."

She got down from the gilded chair on which she had been standing and came towards me.

"It is well I decided on this action, Hasnadar," she explained: "really, you have not been firm enough." She smiled, and this was the first smile of happiness I had seen after the fifteen years that I had tried to love and understand her. As we were speaking the Princess's bell rang.

"You go," ordered Djavidane to a slave standing near her; "say that Pervine is

ill and that you will replace her. Should her Highness not accept your offer, tell her some one else will come in your place, and whilst you are speaking we will enter." The slave hurried away to execute the order given to her by Djavidane, then we followed.

How long the hall and corridor seemed, and the rooms adjoining the Sultana's! Every light was burning. Djavidane walked behind. She knew that she had only to command and the band of slaves, excited by her words, would act even more violently, perhaps, than she wished.

Pushed by other shoulders, which followed me, breathlessly, I too arrived in the Princess's room. I know not what Aïché exclaimed as, lying on her golden bed, she saw us all enter.

All I remember was Leyla's face of anguish and despair; then her form trembled, her lips parted, and she smiled; but there was in that smile an eternity of human distress.

It seems to me that always, when my

thoughts wander back to the events connected with this tragedy, my mind dwells on the anguish and pain of that smile.

But a hundred tongues had been let loose; old and young were calling together :

“We would save you, Princess ; you were being killed, and we knew it not. Leyla Sultana was killing you !”

Then Princess Aïché rose calmly, and standing barefoot on the steps of her bed she said :

“What do you say? Why have you come?”

Her voice for a few seconds silenced the slaves, then an immense pity for her filled their hearts. So instead of answering her question at once, they advanced towards her and bowed very low.

“Sultana, if you really must know, let us first drive away your enemy.”

And before I could even say a word every arm was stretched towards Leyla.

“There she is!” they cried together.

“Leyla is the vampire.”

She had not moved ; grasping one of the golden columns of the bed, she seemed to be waiting for their attack.

“What are you doing, Calfats ?” cried Aïché. “What are you doing ? Stop !”

Then Djavidane spoke :

“First of all,” she said, “let all the doors be guarded, then, Sultana, read this letter. Your Osmanli blood will give you the courage to do what you ought.” She advanced towards Aïché, who took the letter.

“It is Leyla’s writing,” she said calmly ; then she drew herself back suddenly, as if she had discovered a precipice at her feet. Not a muscle of her face moved. The letter was long ; she read it ; then, without even looking at Leyla, she returned the letter.

“Keep it, Djavidane,” she said calmly. “I do not know what you intend to do, but you will need this letter to justify your conduct.”

Djavidane seized it eagerly.

“Now, Sultana, you understand us.”

Then raising her voice, "Do what you like, my sisters!" she called.

The slaves then rushed on Leyla, but at the moment when they intended to do their worst, the respect they had for royal blood and their long years of slavery almost prevented them.

"Slaves," she answered, "be quick; do as you will!"

Her insulting voice gave them courage; they advanced, but Djavidane broke through the ranks.

"I alone will touch her," she cried; then I saw with my own eyes Djavidane, like a wild beast, tearing out the Sultana's beautiful hair and forcing her to bend her knee. Till then I had not yet moved, hidden behind the slaves, but now I came forward.

"Djavidane, Djavidane," I cried, "remember she is a Sultana." Why had I said this—what instinct had I suddenly obeyed?—because—must I own it?—from that moment I could not really put all the blame on Leyla.

"This is not a question of a Sultana," she answered, "but a criminal"; and in order to stimulate the departing energy of the slaves she went on: "Yes, this woman is a criminal; she wanted to kill our Sultana."

"Yes," hissed a hundred voices at these words, "it was our Sultana she wanted to kill. Princess Aïché, what do you command us to do?"

"Do your duty!" answered Aïché.

Then, dragged by her beautiful red hair into the middle of the room, I saw a hundred arms raised, I heard cries and screams, and a few seconds afterwards Leyla was pushed before the Sultana's bed, her dress torn, her neck bleeding, and her hands bound by the golden waist-belt of her dress.

"I have never loved you, Aïché," she said to her cousin in a strange voice, "but I have never hated you either. Later you will know why I determined to kill you."

"Take her away!" ordered Aïché.

Then a hundred arms seized her and

dragged her along the room, and an instant afterwards Edhem appeared at the door, bleeding too, his hands bound, as were Leyla's, and in his eyes was a look of almost madness, which made Aïché stagger for a moment.

"Take him away, too," she cried, with the voice of an empress, "and shut them up together!"

Then the room emptied, and in a short while all that remained of this terrible scene was Aïché, standing calm and quiet, and I, at some distance, staring vacantly at her.

"Was it you who arranged this?" she said, after some time.

"No," I avowed.

"Who then?"

"Djavidane."

"Why?" she asked.

I did not answer. She understood, no doubt. But just at that moment the slave herself entered.

"Your orders have been executed," she said; "Dilaver is there to watch them.

Presently they will both be taken to Yildiz."

Aïché looked at her ; she remained quite calm.

" Thank you, Djavidane," she said. " I will not forget."

But the slave would not be thanked. Opening the folds of her dress, she fetched from near her heart great lumps of red hair, steeped in blood, and she held them tight like a precious treasure.

" I have had my reward," she said ; " I have had my reward."

CHAPTER V

WAITING FOR THE TRIAL

AFTER the terrible scene I have just related, we came here with the Princess Aïché, seriously ill, the slaves obeying Djavidane.

Djavidane had warned the Imperial Palace of what was happening, and during the night we left for Yildiz. Only when we were coming away did I fully realize how happy we really had been and what a simple, tranquil existence we had led, although every tiny event had become in our eyes almost a question of State.

How I had loved my lessons with Aïché! How I had enjoyed hearing the piano mistress play! How I miss my own room looking on to the Bosphorus! How I shall long for the

park, the salons, the little slaves whom I brought up, and, in fact, every inch of that Emerald Palace where I had wished to live and die! And now all that life is passed ; to my beloved Princess and me it is only a happy memory.

For many days in her delirium the Princess called Edhem and Leyla by name, then, when she regained consciousness, she asked me :

“Dilfeza, did they really love one another? Then why did they want to kill me?”

Then later she asked, “Where are they? Are they still together? And where is Djavidane?” and when she spoke of them her lips trembled.

“I know nothing ; I do not even think of them, neither should you,” I replied.

I knew, however, and Aïché will soon know, that they are both prisoners at the Palace with their accomplice, the doctor, and that for Edhem it will mean exile or death.

.

This morning the Sultan, our master, sent for me. I followed the negro who fetched me along the corridors which connect one kiosk with another. I passed through large empty halls, and at last arrived at my destination. To see the master terrified me. When his daughter was young I saw him very often, and many times he told me, "I will build up a throne of happiness for Aïché."

But can this really be he—the master? With a voice of anguish, he asked :

"Dilfeza, what has happened to my child?"

My eyes filled with tears and my lips refused to pronounce what I wanted to say.

"But how is she?"

I explained what I knew, that Aïché was still suffering, though she never complained.

His back more and more bent, the master walked up and down the room, examining the designs of the Gueundez carpet, with his long hands behind his back.

"Aïché, Aïché, my child!" he exclaimed.

Then, when I saw he had nothing more to say, I bowed and retired.

"Kiss her for me," he said simply.

In the middle of this room, littered with papers and documents and books, stands a high table. It is here that the Sultan works. The windows look on to a garden almost as big as a forest, and over the lawns the swans walk. The room, with white hangings and heavy carpets, is gay and light, and quite simple.

.
This evening there was an eclipse of the moon. This used once to terrify me. My mother explained that the dragon was devouring the poor moon, and accordingly I quickly said my verse of the Koran.

I too taught the slaves to be afraid and to pray, but Aïché explained to me all about the eclipse.

I was sorry to have my faith shaken.

It was good to believe in this enormous monster who devoured the little moon. But fortunately many still remain in ignorance, and the Yildiz soldiers asked permission to shoot in order to frighten the dragon.

“Now he is dead,” they cried, “for he has not reappeared.”

Aïché laughed ; the moon is again clear ; the outline of the landscape all round is soft, vague, and uncertain, like one of those medallions sent by the foreign kings and which my Princess admires so much.

.

The Princess will see no one, neither the Validé Sultana nor aunts, nor cousins, nor any one from the Imperial Palace. She wants to be alone, so a little palace in the park has been reserved for us. There are so many other palaces here. It is a town in itself, solitary and sad, far away from the rest of the world.

We cannot see the sun here from our

windows, nor the big foreign ships, nor the caïques passing, neither can we hear the men singing. The slaves are still at the Emerald Palace ; they all, including Djavidane, have refused their freedom.

All books, however, have been sent from the Emerald Palace, so the Princess reads a great deal, and thinks. Leyla has not only poured poison into her body but into her soul.

.

We lunched together at a table near the window. The swans were strutting before us, and through the window the peacocks' cries were to be heard ; we gave them bread, and this was the only time when the sad Princess smiled.

Now life will be cruelly long for her. How many years has she still to sit before this window ? So I thought, until suddenly I remembered I had been the greater part of my existence here, and that hundreds of other women are still living here without complaining.

How they must have loved each other,

Leyla and Edhem! The Sultan had inquiries made, and it was found that they had met at nightfall in a kiosk of Leyla's palace. The eunuch, Chemsî, was their accomplice. Leyla had brought him from her father's palace, and probably he shared his mistress's hatred of the Sultan.

Why was I blind to all this? How was it I did not know the culprits could not content themselves with the smiles they gave each other when Aïché was there? How was it I had forgotten that they were human beings? Aïché is thinking it all out, and I follow her thought.

After all, is it not natural? Leyla was sacrificed from her birth. The Sultan, her uncle, married her to an unimportant official, "a miserable old man," to quote Aïché, whilst Edhem was charming and young. For a long time Leyla smarted under this insult; for a long time she had bent her head and mourned for the father who died in her

arms. But sorrow taught her the science of life: she knew she was beautiful, and that beauty was not to be wasted.

Aïché wanted to go away; but whither was she to go? Sultanas hardly ever go out. Once a year during Ramazan they go to Stamboul, to kiss the Prophet's mantle. The Sultan and his Court are installed at the old Palace. The relics of the Prophet are taken out of their cases, then all the princes, functionaries, ministers, and generals pass in line to see these pious souvenirs and kiss the mantle in the presence of the Sultan, the Prophet's successor. All the women come, the Sultan's mother, his wives, his daughters, his favourites, all guarded by two lines of soldiers as they cross the town. But we have still six months before this pilgrimage is due; we must wait six months before we again see the streets of Stamboul.

.

And Aïché thinks soon Edhem and

Leyla will meet again, and that even before the judges they will be able to see one another, and there will be more love in that one look than ever she had known. Of that love which drives one to crime and death she had no experience. She even envied their fate, albeit the end was punishment, exile, death, for the story of her life is already finished; she loved with a child's heart, and while still a child her life is over: there will never be for her tenderness and smiles, she will never know what real love is. She possesses pearls, palaces, lands and slaves, and a throne of happiness, but the man who shared it is gone.

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Spring! Spring! How familiar you are! The joy of seeing you again! How many more seasons will I find consolation in your perfumes and your beautiful roses? And the chaste and simple harmony of your colours? Gar-

dens where my age will ripen, how I have loved you!

It was in spring, I remember, I left Yildiz to go to that other palace yonder, and here in spring they dreamt their dreams of love—those two; and now again it is spring, when they are in mourning for those dreams and that love.

.

The Sultan was to have come to-day to see his daughter. He was prevented at the last moment; so the negro Nervasse came to tell us not to expect him, but did not tell us the reason.

In the night shots were fired. Aïché was frightened. She is sleeping in the room where she slept before her marriage. I occupy the room beside her, my bed drawn up against the wall, so that I can hear her breathing. Now at least her eyes are closed; I wonder whether she hears me writing. She never asks me to read what I have

written—perhaps she guesses what it is about.

.

The Albanians of the Imperial Guard revolted last night. The little slaves who came to tell us about it were terrified. What is to become of us?

.

Edhem and Leyla are to be judged in a very short time; probably it will be after Baïram, when the sheep will have been sacrificed and distributed to the poor.

Dilaver came to tell me the news.

They are collecting, it appears, evidence, questioning the slaves, Djavidane amongst others.

What did she say?

She owned that she stole the letters, without in any way compromising the chief Albanian, who remembers nothing about it.

“What did they say?”

"They congratulated Djavidane," answered Dilaver, with a sad smile, "for her devotion to the Princess."

We looked at one another in silence.

.

Even here near the master it is not all peace.

The Sultan was much upset, Nervasse told us; that is why he could not come. He has changed the garrison at Yildiz. Arabs will take the place of the Albanians.

I am wondering, supposing the Palace were burned, whether Aïché and I could not escape to the town; then perhaps she would not suffer so much.

To-day again the gunshots have been heard. I am no longer afraid. I am waiting.

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There is order again amongst the troops, Nervasse tells me. To-morrow is Baïram. Three hundred sheep have been taken to the Palace. To-morrow

they will be sacrificed ; there will be blood enough to fill a large ditch, and their flesh will be distributed to the poor.

“To-morrow you must see your Imperial father,” I said to the Princess.

“I am too tired,” she added. “The master will understand.”

CHAPTER VI

THE "OGRE'S HEART"

"**W**HY are they waiting so long for that trial?" asked Aïché this morning.

For many days she had not pronounced the names of Edhem and Leyla.

"Dilfeza," she said, "I am suffering. Why this delay? Let them be pardoned or killed, but understand, dear old friend, I cannot live in this uncertainty."

"I will ask the Sultan," I said.

Towards the evening I went. On my knees I begged him to answer. At first he could not. Then his eyes flashed with hatred and his voice became hard and cruel.

"You can tell Aïché she shall not wait," he said suddenly.

.

They have left their prison, the two lovers, and will be tried at the Palace. Djavidane is there, veiled. Dilaver tells me she is happy, for she will see Edhem again. Dilaver is also a witness, and several slaves.

But although all this is taking place, we seem to know nothing about it.

Are Leyla's eyes as beautiful as ever? Is her bearing as proud? Does she still fascinate that poor unfortunate man who would even have killed Aïché to please her? My child, your life is so simple compared with hers—you, the faithful wife ; she, the unforgiving criminal. Pale and fair, you are a dream. She with her red lips, her eyes which have so long known the bitterness of tears, and her soul nursed in anguish, is life.

Yet why—oh, why did the desire to kill enter Leyla's mind?

.

Aïché is in bed ; she will not get up.

"Stay with me all day long ; I am afraid," she said.

She starts at every noise ; I wish she could cry, that she could sob, and talk of her sorrow ; I would like to hear her words of hatred and violence ; it seems to me it would do her good.

.

Dilaver came this morning.

"Yes," he said, "Leyla looked still more beautiful veiled. Her eyes were on fire. She smiled. Captivity has not changed her. She only spoke in monosyllables, to own that she alone was responsible for all that had been done ; the doctor and Edhem had both been terrorized by her."

"And what about Djavidane ?" I asked.

"Djavidane is happy ; to-morrow she bears witness again."

"And how is Edhem Pasha ?"

"He is not recognizable."

Aïché summoned the old servant.

"Tell me all about it," she commanded, and he repeated what he had told me. She listened silently.

"Was his Majesty there?" she asked.

"No; he will be there to-morrow."

.

Leyla had said, "I will only speak before the Sultan, my father's murderer"; and she kept her promise.

"Sultan of the House of Osman," she said, in answer to the accusation, "usurper of the throne, what is it you want to know? Why I tried to kill your daughter? The answer is simple enough: because you killed my father. For years and years, vile monarch, I tried to find some way of punishing you for your crime; I could find none. You were so mighty. I could not reach you to hurt you. But I never lost courage. Every day my father's spirit rose up and said to me, 'Leyla, never forget my tears.' I promised him to remember, and I have kept my word. One day, when I was still a child, I dis-

covered your heart could beat at the very name of Aïché ; later that memory haunted me. 'My greatest glory,' you said, 'is to see her happy.' It is that glory that I have destroyed."

The judges questioned whether she should continue to speak.

"Go on, Leyla !" said the Sultan.

"I wanted to destroy that happiness, and I have succeeded. To make you suffer was not an easy matter. Have you a conscience, a heart, a soul? Whither are you going, charged with crimes a thousand times blacker than mine? My crime is the continuation of your work ! Did you ever think of what you were doing when you killed my father? Yes, Sultan, it was to humble you for one day, one hour, that I ruined the lives of both Aïché and Edhem. You had built a temple of happiness for your daughter, but even your power cannot rebuild the ruins I have made. I have punished you, master, and I am happy."

Aïché heard it all. She knows that Leyla must die, and that Edhem is to go into exile, and the doctor to prison for life. Yet she neither weeps nor speaks. A feeling of horror seems to have frozen her altogether—a feeling of horror at being punished in the place of the Sultan, and, after all, perhaps Leyla was right.

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Aïché has refused to see her father, the powerful, unhappy Sultan, our master.

Dilaver took the message.

"Dilfeza," he said, when he returned, "Leyla has indeed had her revenge—for the first time our Sultan has wept."

EPILOGUE

VERY great changes have taken place since I visited the Turkish Princess. By now, perhaps, the reforming fever which swept over the land at the time of the Constitution has reached the homes of the Princesses. Has the God in whose hands their destinies are placed allowed a little more light to come into the lives of these cloistered Sultanas, or have they perhaps at the present moment more liberty than they know how to appreciate?

With the disappearance of Hamid, the last of the Sultans, so much of the picturesque Eastern colouring has vanished. What was formerly so truly Eastern is now an imitation of the West, and the Sultan, who a short

while ago was girt with the sword of Osman, is now a monogamous Constitutional monarch. Surely this is not the East at all!

It was on the evening of the 26th of April; so little did Hamid suspect what was coming that the usual instructions were given to his secretaries. But the Hamid who for thirty-three years had so well calculated his moves had become too sure of his power. "Check!" cried the nation, and his game was lost.

He heard vaguely, however, that something was happening—no one dared to tell him there was another Sultan, but he prepared himself for the worst, confident that some inspiration would come to him.

He was sitting in the Kiosk of Tchit, the home of the Princess Aïché, the most beautiful of all the Yildiz kiosks; here it was that he had worked and rested and received his most familiar friends, and sometimes his Ministers in council. What had Fate in store for him?

The mournful look of his entourage, the awful silence and the dim lights of the Tchit frightened him. Calling the eunuchs, he had the electric light switched on, and ordered that all the torches and lamps and candles should be fetched and placed in the mirrored hall, and there he waited. Yet which one of his subjects would dare to enter this almost sacred Palace, where his favourite daughter lived? And there he sat, bathed in the blazing light—the last of the old Sultans surrounded by the last of his magnificence.

.

Now they are coming, the soldiers of the Constitution. He can hear their steps. They have crossed the threshold of the Harem of the Princess Aïché.

Now they are in his presence. Four officers speak to him, to "Prince Hamid," for the Fetva of the Sheik ul-Islam has deprived him of his power. Another, his own brother, sits on the throne of Osman,

and he will end his days as his brother Mourad did before him, a prisoner of State.

"Mercy, mercy!" he cried; yet how could he expect mercy when for over thirty years he had ignored the meaning of the sacred word?

"Only do not kill me," he sobbed like a little child. "Let me live in the Palace of Tcheragan. There I was born; there let me die. There it was I kept my poor afflicted brother Mourad in every comfort; only show to me a little of the kindness I showed to him."

The officers were calm but resolute. "Only do not kill me," again and again sobbed Hamid, and as he was led through the darkness of the Yildiz Park to the carriage which was waiting to drive him to the station, all the while he cried for mercy, but no one answered him. For thirty-three years these servants of the Constitution had longed and hoped and prayed for vengeance: now it was their duty to protect their Constitution

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and depose the Sultan, they only pitied him.

“I have taken men from the gutter and have given them palaces. Where are they now? Can they not see that mercy is extended to me? Where are those men whose counsel I followed so blindly?” And the wretched monarch, shorn of his magnificence, thought over the long list of his favourites, the men who had executed all his whims and fancies. “Where are they?” he asked again and again. “Fled!” was the only answer he could get. Then there was silence.

How had the mighty fallen!

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He was imprisoned in a comfortable villa which was converted into a home for him at Salonica. Books he could have, and flowers and tools, so that he might indulge in his favourite pastime of carpentering, and as many of his wives and favourites as chose to follow him. Yet of all that pampered assembly, wives

and slaves and servants, the gilded beauties of his Harem, only eleven went with him into captivity.

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The Princess Aïché was back again at the Emerald Palace with her faithful Hasnadar. That change the Constitution had brought her. All her surroundings were sad, and everything reminded her of the past she had hoped was dead and buried.

Yet if the Constitution had brought her little freedom, her humbler sisters had now what they had earnestly desired—the right to see those lands and those civilizations about which they had read so much.

The townswomen who had come to her, knowing how Hamid loved her and wished to give her pleasure, to ask that their husbands should not be sent to foreign lands, now wanted them to be nominated to posts abroad, so that they might accompany them.

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To the Emerald Palace came Madame Hamid Bey, who had so ardently longed to follow her husband to Europe, and after the Constitution had her wish gratified.

"Tell me your experiences; I must envy your happiness," said the Princess.

Then the Secretary's wife told of the splendour of the Western Court, the sensation that a real Turkish woman had caused in society, and how she had been everywhere and seen everything, until at times she longed for the peace of her Turkish home again.

"But you can never settle here again," said the Princess.

"Yes, in a little while," she answered—"in a very little while, dear Princess, I shall want to be back, and I know in what land I pray that I may be laid to rest."

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They did not tell Hamid that his daughter was coming.

For weeks negotiations were carried on ; permission was refused, until the wife of the Grand Vizier arranged with her husband that the Princess's desire to see her father must be gratified.

In his villa prison he heard the muezins calling to prayer. Wretched and lonely and degraded though he was, he clung pitifully to life. Five times a day he responded to the call and prayed that he might live, then he prayed for his daughter and for Turkey.

She came disguised as a slave, attended by her faithful Hasnadar. He had been working all morning, and was resting on the divan in the corner of the room. She knelt before him and made as if she would kiss the hem of his garment.

" Majesty," she said simply, and he recognized the voice of his beloved daughter.

The Hasnadar left them together, and together they wept in silence. What was there for them to say ? Only once did he make any reference to the broken life for

which he was responsible, but his daughter silenced him.

“Majesty,” she said, “what are those wonderful words which we Turkish women learn so soon as we are able to understand that there is a God above us? ‘Though my sins be as great as the ocean, Thy pardon is greater still, Allah.’”

Then the Princess Aïché left him weeping and alone.

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